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Ebb and Flow
Of Life

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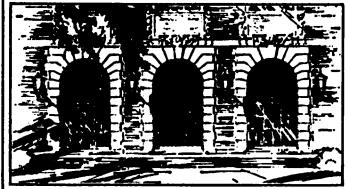
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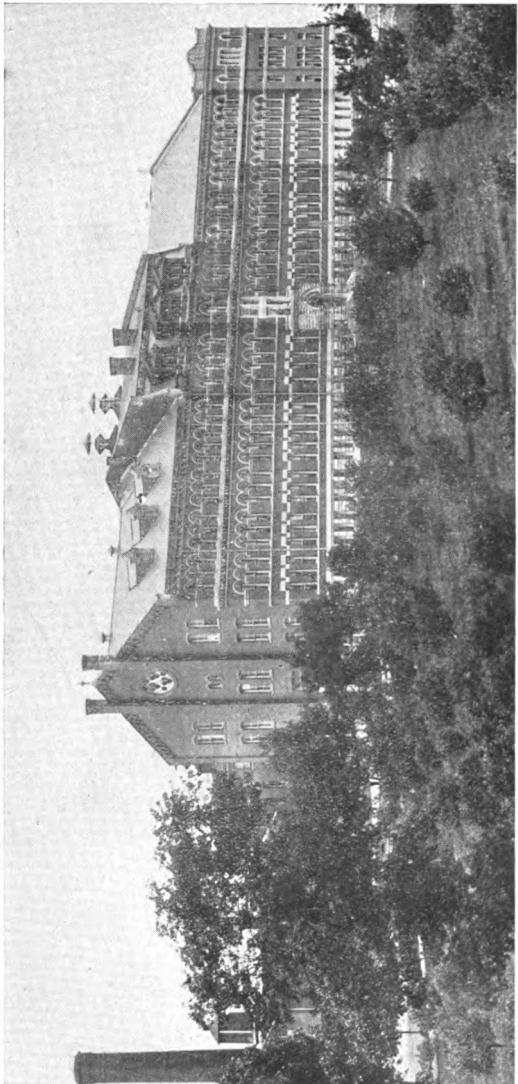
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The Ebb and Flow of Life

*New Stories for Old and Young
in Four Volumes*

BY

KONRAD KÜMMEL

*Translated from the third and fourth German editions with the
permission of the author*

By

**A Father of St. Bede Abbey
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VOLUME THREE

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The Last Priest

The Baron von Margenlehn of Margenlehn with an angry laugh, turned on his heels and threw a large printed document he held in his hand on the table.

“Now, then, what do you say to that, Sir?” he inquired of the gentleman who was sitting next to his writing-desk in an armchair; the man addressed adjusted a pair of golden pince-nez to his pale sour visage and nervously toyed with his handsome moustache. Before he could answer the nobleman went gushing on: “Roma locuta—the superlatively wise lords of the Supreme Court have given their decision; it is infallible, of course, most infallible, in the manner of jurists generally.”

The man in the armchair coughed slightly.

“Excepting the gentleman present,” von Margenlehn apologized tartly; “the lords have really found and pronounced the rascally farmers to be guileless lambs and me, a quarrelsome fellow! I am in the wrong and my neighbors are in the right; my suit has been overruled on every point; I have lost my case gloriously and the rabble, think of it, has been upheld! That contemptible nest down there, mind you, which is worrying me to death, has won!”

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“The Catholics you mean,” the nobleman’s lawyer, the man in the armchair, now added.

“My suit is held untenable under each of its three heads,” the baron stormed, “and the costs and witness-fees to boot—’twill make a fine sum to meet—and the ridicule withal it will bring upon me!”

“The latter will not be wanting,” the lawyer assured his client; “the farmers will find it out by evening and then the two taprooms will do fine business to-night; the crowd will drink itself full and crazy—it is a pity the judges can not be of the party and be compelled to fraternize with them cheek by jowl, ha, ha!”

“It would serve them right, the quill-chasers, the hair-splitters, the pettifoggers,” continued the enraged baron; “could they not have put themselves in my place? It is not that I care so much for the few miserable florins involved but for my reputation among this country trash who have little use for me at the best.”

“You are right, baron,” the attorney interrupted, “and especially in this place where the difference in Religion plays so conspicuous a role. Only for this sectarian division there would have been no trial at all. Still, what can we do, now that the court of last instance has turned us down?”

“Yes, and I could easily have saved myself the shame and the expense,” the nobleman muttered.

The lawyer smiled. “As regards the last,” he remarked, “you have little reason to grieve; a man in your position is not affected by such a trifle.”

"Affected to that extent at least, in that it gives the farmers good reason to turn summersault with malignant joy. It is true, as you say, a couple thousand more or less is of no consequence to me, thank God; but these fellows will think that such a sum will force me into bankruptcy by to-morrow! The devil knows!"

"Baron, this little misfortune of the lost suit is now of the past; make the best of it and forget it."

"But I can't forbid the rustics to forget about it," he stubbornly retorted; "as often as they see me or whenever they look up at my castle, they will recall the story. What they will think and say of me with malicious delight at such times I can well imagine—I know this only too well."

"I am not so simple as not to have taken into consideration the possibility of an adverse decision. I have provided for this very contingency," the professional henchman observed with studied gravity.

"And how?" his noble client asked, looking at him expectantly.

"The remedy is simple," the lawyer answered; "to keep the rabble from gossiping about you, give them something else to talk about."

The baron shook his head. "My friend," he replied, "that were a wonderful expedient indeed; but tell me, how would you go about it?"

"Well then, in this way. If the farmers insist upon their right, do you insist upon yours. Right against right. But the right upon which

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you can insist and which no one can dispute, will touch these bigoted boors to the quick. In the present instance they have won, now it is your turn to win; you have the last word, say it. He laughs best who laughs last."

"I don't catch the drift of your remarks," the nobleman said; "it would indeed be something worth your while, if you could really help me over the shame of this defeat."

The lawyer apparently took no notice of the bribe implied. He responded simply: "Sir Baron, I am wholly at your service and beg merely that you hear me out."

Thereupon the nobleman somewhat pacified, sat down at last in his chair by the desk and listened calmly.

It will suffice to inform the reader, that for many years Baron von Margenlehn had been fighting the village Untermargen in the courts about certain forestry rights and privileges. He had come from the North a total stranger who thought it no concern of his to become acquainted with the character and the peculiarities of the tenantry of the neighborhood; this indifference and proud exclusiveness on his part was aggravated by a difference of Religion.

He and his family were Protestant, but the whole country round was Catholic.

Moreover, it was so like himself, in a harsh and domineering way to meet the people of Untermargen and vicinity, who until then had been used to landlords gentle and considerate. How-

ever, that which jarred the villagers most of all were the new regulations he had sent out, depriving them of the privilege dating back to most ancient times, of gathering brushwood, moss, fallen limbs, berries, etc., in the forests of his estate. The opposition between the parties becoming acute, the case of the Baron von Margenlehn versus the Village Untermargen was brought before court; each side felt itself the aggrieved party and right in its contention.

What added to the bitterness of this legal battle was the fact that the principals directly concerned therein, namely the baron and the parish authorities, had never met face to face; the case of the former was attended to by an unscrupulous lawyer, who purposely strove to drag out the dispute from session and who to enrich himself the more by a prolonged trial, prevented his client and the village from arriving at a peaceful understanding and settlement, which the latter much desired.

Castle Margenlehn, perched securely upon a steep, rocky projection of a densely wooded mountain, lored it proudly over the village Untermargen which lay at its base. From the windows of the lordly mansion you could see the whole town, its streets, the people coming and going. On a grass-covered knob beyond the castle and higher up, a small church stood in a rectangular clearing made decades ago. This clearing was the only sunkissed spot in all this mountain wilder-

ness; a phalanx of hoary pines surrounded it like a living wall.

The chapel had probably been built shortly after the Thirty-Years' War when men were slowly rising again to a realization of better and higher things after decades of bloodshed, carnage and barbarism.

Trusted sentinel of the mountain, its tower, like a huge finger, pointed solemnly skyward. To the west side a two-story building stood closely adjoining the church, the gable end of which served the house as a rear wall. This, the residence of the sexton, was overgrown with ivy and its windows were garlanded with the eglantine. To him, the sacristan, belonged the meadow, the garden and what little land surrounded the sanctuary.

At the present time he had little to do. But it had not always been so. Formerly Castle Margen-lehn had a chaplain who said Mass daily in this chapel in the forest and preached on Sunday and holydays. There was then always a congregation in attendance at "Our Lady of the Solitude," altho it was not a parish church. Visitors were wont to come to this shrine not only from the village below but also from towns in the neighborhood, to bring their tales of sorrow or joy to Mary, the Ever Blessed Virgin.

All this had been changed now. The chaplain's room in the castle was untenanted and daily Mass had ceased. The little chapel, however, had never been entirely deserted; worshipers were still drawn to this quiet, peaceful retreat. Espe-

ially on certain days in the year the concourse of pilgrims was so great that by exception Mass was said for them. This was the case, for example, on Assumption-day, the patronal feast of the church. May-devotions, too, were held here during the whole of Mary's month when the woods were alive with thousands of birds and gay with wild-cherry blossoms.

But particularly did the village people look forward to Advent and to Christmas with a joyful eagerness experienced at no other time. Then did they throng not to their parish church but to this chapel in the woods. The old priest found it not too arduous to lead the way to celebrate the "Rorate" in this favored spot. The young and the aged followed. Even the old grannies enveloped in shawls and furs, with the buoyancy of youth, hobbled thru the snow and over the ice in the dark early morning hours, leaning heavily with their gloved right hand upon a supporting cane, while the left carried a lantern to light their way to the mountain shrine.

Above all were the boys and young men pleased with the exhilarating walk to the nocturnal Rorate devotions. They could hardly await their coming. In the pitch-dark night at the first summons from their father, they would leap out of bed and be the first on the way.

The devout villagers filled the chapel. The old frail organ in the loft sounded sweeter to them than their own in the parish church tho the latter was richer and newer. It seemed to them that

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the old songs, "O ye Heavens, rain Him down!" "O thou Earth, sprout Him forth!" in which the teacher accompanied them, were written especially for the Advent devotions at "Our Lady of the Solitude." They thought that up there, the hymns,—in tone, in thought, in harmony, so devotional and heartfelt, so sonorously uttered,—sounded inimitable; that the very walls, the arches, the angels on the Main Altar encircling the picture of "Our Lady of Grace," the saints on the ceiling rich in gaudy colors, were helping along in the song to the playing of invisible instruments.

But the most touching scene was always the last. On Christmas night, Midnight Mass was celebrated in this solitude. The worshipers could not restrain their eyes ever and anon from casting a sideward look to the one recess in the chapel in which a realistic crib was set up well-lighted and decorated with angels and shepherds and animals, the like of which could not be seen for a hundred miles around. This holy manger remained exposed to view from Christmas to Candlemas, the central figures being changed as the cycle of feasts suggested. During these weeks the little church was never without visitors.

Such, then, was the pilgrimage of "The Solitude." There was joy in the sexton's house nearby. Old Brosi who once upon a time had been Chief Ranger of the ducal forests, had the place in care. Struck down and permanently injured by a tree he was felling, his master had retired him. For the last six years in com-

pensation for the hurt he had sustained and as a quit-claim, he had been put in charge of the chapel and given the rectory adjoining as a home for himself and wife.

He had just come from the organ-loft thru a door which opened directly into the second story of his house. "I'm done with dusting the organ," he said; "the pedals and especially the registers needed it very much; the sparrows used the knobbs to perch on. I also cleaned the miror and the bench; the teacher will find everything spick and span and will compliment me, I am sure. We'll get a little recognition again, old woman, for next week is Advent."

"Oh! don't talk and act as if you were the miraculous picture yourself; people are not coming up here on occount of Sexton Brosi," she laughed. "I, on my part," she added, "have looked over the crib and its furnishings; many things will have to be touched up and made over. No matter how carefully you cover and box it up, it helps very little! A mischievous little mouse found its way inside and did within just what it pleased."

"Did you trap it?"

"No, it was dead already; it had eaten a hole thru the hilly range leading thru Jerusalem mind you, despite the thick, tough canvas. It gnawed holes everywhere; the green meadow must be painted over."

"Pity, little foolish mouse, green paint is s^o unhealthy!" old Brosi laughed. "Did you ex-

amine the figures and statues, wife? I hope they, at least, are intact!"

That very moment the dog began to bark. The woman put her head out of the window. "It is the letter-carrier," she hastened to inform her husband; "he has a letter for us!"

"A letter? I wonder from whom?"

"Yes, indeed, a letter for you," the postman greeted, ascending the stairs. "Here it is; it hails from Prussia judging by the stamp. Maybe it is from Father Philip."

"Would that it were so!" the wife rejoiced. "Let me see it!"

She hobbled down the stairs as fast as she could to meet the carrier.

"It is, it is from Philip, Brosi!" she exclaimed jubilantly. "I know his writing, Brosi; our son, our Reverend Philip writes!"

"Postman, I'll treat on that; come up!" the sexton called down from above. "Our Philip, our Philip!"

"I have another reason for coming here," the letter-carrier remarked as he entered the room. When calling at the castle on my round to deliver some letters and packages, the baron told me to tell you he wished to see you right away."

"I wonder what for?" Brosi reflected with astonishment. "Never a word has he spoken to me or to one of my class all the year round. God grant it's nothing bad he has to say. Woman, get me my Sunday coat and dust my clothes."

"Hand me the letter, Brosi, the letter from Father Philip!"

"We'll read the letter together upon my return from the castle; I'll be back in ten minutes and in the meantime you'll simply have to restrain your curiosity."

The postman laughed and drank his gill of nut-brandy; he and the sexton then left the house together.

The wife had long to wait before her husband returned.

Upon entering Castle Margenlehn the sexton modestly halted at the room of the count until beckoned to enter; the latter seated at his desk, first of all slowly lit a cigar. Then turning to Brosi he said: "I have called for you to inform you that henceforth I will no longer permit religious services to be held in the forest chapel. You will lock the church to-day and hereafter allow no one to enter without my express permission. By and by I will take charge of the key myself. Do you understand?"

With staring eyes and his mouth wide open Brosi heard the fraughted words. Spinning his hat nervously around several times, he stammered: "But, Sir Baron—is—is that right! No Rorate anymore, no crib—"

"You are not asked to reason out my command but to obey!" the master yelled. "Don't stand there like an idiot, collect yourself and do as I have told you!"

Brosi, pale as a sheet, with tears in his eyes, pushed his hat under his arm; then folding his hands he was about to pray and plead for mercy; but the baron cut him short with his right hand menacingly pointing to the door: "That will do, go!" A moment after the old sexton was outside the portal.

He touched, he shook his head. "Have I my senses?" he muttered; "did I hear aright? The shrine of 'Our Lady of the Solitude' to be closed, no Rorate, no holy manger—the people will come and gather in front of the church and I must not open the door? It is impossible,—impossible,—he has no right to give such a command; the chapel has always been the people's. Moreover, I have the Rev. Pastor to appeal to," he soliloquized; "I'll go down to Untermargen to consult him." Hastily and with long strides Brosi descended the hill and called upon the priest.

It was no news to His Reverence. By letter the baron had informed him ere this of the fact.

The aged pastor permitted Brosi to speak out and to weep his fill; it was a relief to the old servant whose emotions were uncontrollable. Bracing up after awhile the sexton said: "Rev. Father, my opinion is that we all get together and sue again—with more determination even than we did for our forest rights and with a persistency a hundredfold stronger. Every one will gladly contribute what he can, just so we engage the best lawyer."

The pastor smiling sadly, replied: "Good Brosi, if we did as you suggested, we would be playing into the hands of the baron. We would certainly lose the suit and for our pains have nothing but the costs to pay and the shame to endure. The chapel of "The Solitude" is the unconditional property of the Margenlehn estate; if the lord wishes to close it, he can do so and no one can gainsay him."

"But, Rev. Father, the chapel is for the people, and the people have always had Divine Services in it...."

"Yes, yes, Brosi, but only with the consent of the proprietor. If the landlord commands the church to be closed, we can do nothing, we have absolutely no claim upon it. Even if he determined to tear it down—we could not prevent him."

"Let him dare, let him dare it, the Margenlehn-er," the old man exploded;—"we'd show him! He'd have the whole parish to face; the people wouldn't stand for any harm being done the Lady's chapel, and if—"

"There will be bloodshed and murder," the priest added. "That's what you wanted to say, did you not? Shame on you!"

"I can't help it, Your Reverence; think of it,—to suffer this—no Rorate any more—the church to remain locked during Advent and the holy Christmas time,—it is a sin crying to heaven, so it is!"

"Brosi, nothing good is accomplished by violence, least of all in the present case. The lord is

a stubborn man. He is obdurate twice over and exasperated for having lost his suit against the parish; this is his revenge. For the meantime the evil cannot be remedied. Do as you were ordered by the baron; I will let the people know about it and then we will consider what's to be done. In all probability the villagers will send a deputation to the castle to beg the lord to reconsider and permit the parish the use of the chapel as before; we may do even more; but we'll not take our grievance to court. In any case the wrath of the baron will be soonest pacified and his heart softened if we have recourse to prayer rather than to curses and threats."

The poor sexton was so bewildered with grief he hardly knew how he got back over the hill to his home. Whenever the castle was visible between the trees, he halted and exclaimed: "O Margenlehner, you fire-eater, you Hotspur, what have you done? Who was your adviser? The devil from the very pit of hell! Do you ever think of God? Don't you fear Him? I can tell you what such a sin against God and His Blessed Mother will lead to!" Then in his simple way he prayed: "Holy Mother of God, behold our misery; all is lost; see, we are to have no Advent and Christmas as has been customary; oh! lift thy hands to thy Divine Son in behalf of thy dear little chapel of "The Solitude" and bring the baron to a saner state of mind!"

Was it a fortunate or unfortunate sign that at this very moment the castle emerging from a sea

of light with which the setting autumn sun had flooded it, loomed up on yonder eminence from out a wilderness of trees, begilded and glorified like a temple of the skies? And that the chapel of Our Lady, as the sexton saw it on gaining the hilltop, was illuminated and transfigured in a haze of light?

His wife was eagerly awaiting her husband at the door of the house; with a face beaming with delight she was waving him a welcome with the letter from her son in her outstretched, beckoning hand.

“Brosi! Brosi!” she called, “Philip is coming, our son, our Reverend Philip; he will be here next week and remain with us a few days!”

Before relating what was uppermost in his mind Brosi first listened to his wife, who hastened to inform him that Philip with two companions had made a trip to the far-away North, whence he had recently been called to Rome, where henceforth he would be stationed for some years, and that on his way thither having to pass within a few miles of his birthplace, he had asked for and received permission to spend a couple of days with his parents.

“Ah, that is the reason, then, why the sun shines so brightly this evening,” Brosi remarked. “It is an old saying that misfortune never comes single; for once the proverb has failed; joy and sorrow enter my door this day hand in hand.” The two entered the house and the sexton told his helpmate all that had happened to him during his

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absence. She could hardly trust her ears. Intense as was the anticipatory joy she felt at the news of her son's coming, even it was drowned in her present sorrow. But of a sudden a ray of comfort dispelled the gloom. With a happy mien she said: "Brosi, you'll see, our Father Philip when he comes will set things right. It is not pure chance that his visit falls in with this trial of ours. I am convinced that the Mother of God is sending him to help us. You know with what fervor he used to pray before her image even as a child, with what delight he was wont to visit her shrine, yea, this chapel, in which he said his First Mass. You'll see; you'll see; Philip will make it all right; our Holy Mother is sending him."

"I hope so!" the husband replied; his voice however, betrayed that his hope was weak and wavering.

An air of gloom and depression was holding the castle in thrall altho it was approaching dinner time. It was the second Sunday in Advent and the baron with his family had just returned from attending church in the neighboring city. The valley and the mountain passes were hidden under a murky pall and equally so was the temperament of the landlord overlaid with an atmosphere dark and forbidding. He had come to realize that the arbitrary closing of the Pilgrim-Chapel was by no means a matter of small import. His brisk dismissal of the village-deputation, his demand that the church key be delivered to him,

the locking up of the shrine, put the people into such a state of excitement that it appalled him. The fieldwork was over and in consequence the villagers had all the leisure they wanted to give vent to their deep and threatening anger. Rumblings of the coming storm reached the castle as a matter of course.

The baroness especially was continually ill at ease and feared the worst. She was afraid that some harm would happen to her, to the baron and most certainly to their children. Whenever the lord and his lady drove thru the town they were passed with lowering looks, ungreeted by the village populace, whose mutterings interspersed with loud imprecations, could not help but disquiet the noble couple more and more.

The firstborn of the baron, a fine boy of fourteen years, was in the room with his father, turning the pages of a magazine. Just then a servant entered with the message that Father Philip, the son of the sexton, wished to pay his respects to the baron if it were agreeable.

With evident dislike the nobleman looked up, but before he could reply his son gleefully exclaimed: "Father Philip!—Oh, I am glad, papa, for it will afford me a chance to thank him for the valuable Danish and Swedish stamps he has contributed to my collection! Is he at the door?"

"Tell him to come in," the baron half-heartedly answered, the while murmuring to himself: "Some more lamentations are now in order, no doubt, about the church;" then turning to his son,

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he said: "I would like mamma to come to my study to meet Father Philip."

A minute or two latter the young Benedictine Father entered. He stated, that in view of the many benefits he had received during his college and seminary years from the late baron of happy memory, the father of the present incumbent of Castle Margenlehn, he considered it a sacred duty upon the occasion of his visit to his parents' home, to pay his regards to the young lord, the son of his noble benefactor. That on account of the kindness to him of the late baron deceased, he would never forget his heir nor those of his house.

"You have already proven your gratitude in that you have given my son Charles great pleasure sending him the rare stamps from the North. I presume you have made an educational trip to Scandinavia?"

"I was permitted to accompany two of my brethren thither," the Religious replied. Without let the baron began to question the young priest about the particulars of his northern trip. Before long his son appeared with the mother. The boy, who had met the Religious before, was profuse in his thanks. "You have been in Norway; have you seen the midnight sun, Father Philip?" he asked eagerly. "I could listen to you all day telling about it."

"The simplest way to gratify you, Sir Charles, will be to invite you to a meeting this afternoon at which I will speak. You are most

welcome and it would be an honor to me if you accepted the invitation."

"A meeting this afternoon?" the baron asked agitated and angered. "That would be the proverbial last straw!"

"Yes, Sir Baron, a meeting of men. The Rev. Pastor has asked me to tell them about my trip."

"Are the farmers really so much interested in the geography and natural curiosities of Norway and the Artic Regions?" the lord inquired sarcastically and suspiciously.

"The common people are very anxious to learn," the Religious answered, "and I know my story will give them pleasure."

"But what is the principal reason for the meeting?" the nobleman asked with an ill-concealed mistrust.

"To tell about my travels to the North, Sir Baron," was the answer; "I have matter to fill out many hours agreeably. The Rev. Pastor has begged me to speak." Saying which the face of the Religious dyed a deep red, for he recalled what the village priest had said besides: "It will be a good thing to get the people to hear and speak about something else; your lecture will perhaps divert their minds from a course of thought which if pursued might lead to action dangerous to the baron."

The blush that had momentarily suffused the face of the Religious did not escape the anxious, watchful eyes of the baron and baroness: they looked at each other questioningly. To help himself

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out of his embarrassment the Religious observed: "It will not be a closed meeting: every one is invited and if the baron accompanied by his son would deign to honor us with his presence we would appreciate it most highly."

The nobleman looked at the speaker dumbfounded; he had not in the least expected such a proposal.

His wife was simply startled at the invitation of Father Philip.

"You have lately been under the weather," she said to her husband, "you will have to take care of yourself."

He evaded this expression of fear on her part by answering the Religious: "Perhaps—it is possible I may come; but whether or not, I thank you for your kindness."

Later on, at the dinner table, the count said to his wife: "I'll take the bull by the horns. My steward and my warden will accompany me; they will serve as witnesses in case any trouble arises. The priest, intimidated by my presence, will not dare then and there to incite the men against me, and, on the other hand, my appearance will convince the peasants that I am not afraid of them. If there is any violence it will serve my purpose excellently. However, to provide against every contingency, I'll also pocket a revolver and take Sultan with me."

The hall of "The Eagle" was packed to the last place with old and young men. After being introduced by the Rev. Pastor, Father Philip began

to tell of his travels thru Denmark and Norway. The men listened to him spell-bound. The audience was so quiet that you could hear the murmur of prayers from the church across the street where the women and children were gathered at the time, reciting the Rosary in common. They were imploring the Mother of God to reopen the shrine of "The Solitude."

Father Philip had just begun speaking, when the door opened and the baron with his companions entered. The late comers seated themselves quietly around a little table which was purposely reserved for them. The visit of the baron acted upon the gathering like an electric shock.

Heads turned right and left and eyes betokening nothing friendly were fixed upon the nobleman. Mutterings were heard and significant looks interchanged. The priest tapping the bell lightly, begged the audience to follow the speaker without disturbance. In a short while the lecturer had the rapt attention of his hearers again and all signs of commotion had disappeared. The longer he spoke, the more he held and fascinated them.

He told them of the wonderful beauties of Norway, the land of the fiords, of islands, countless bays, beetling crags and precipices; of the grandeur of its seabound cliffs and of its natural curiosities inland. Touchingly he alluded to the records still extant in many a church and shrine and ruin, which proclaim to the traveler that the old Catholic faith had once upon a time blessed the

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land. His recital was so vivid and graphic that the time passed without any one taking notice of it.

"And now let me tell you one more beautiful, soulful, historic incident which I learnt in the very place and spot where it had happened, and I am thru.

"When the traveler has passed the locks of Loeweid and his boat has reached the mirror-like surface of the broad and deep Nordjoe, a panorama will open up before him, unique in its kind: Bald promontories whose precipitous sides are reflected in the dark waters below, with forbidding crags that reach into the cloudlands, alternate with meadows of luscious grass and pine forests tinted the freshest of green. On the slopes of the secluded inlets he can see the ruins of the castles of the ancient nobility and the handsome houses of the modern well-to-do Scandinavian; the huts also of the poor fishermen who, to eke out a miserable existence are daily risking their lives in combat with the sea.

"He may come across old log churches hidden away in sheltered recesses, dating back to times past memory, some in ruins, some still well-preserved, mute and venerable witnesses of an age of faith that has long ago vanished. To the right in one of these seaward nooks, perhaps a hundred feet above sea-level, an opening may be descried about twelve feet high in the granite mountain wall. This is the entrance to the cave in which the last priest of Norway lived and died at the time of the Reformation. My story concerns him."

The hall was quiet, you might have heard a pin drop. The congregational prayer from the church across the street could again be heard distinctly.

Father Philip mustering his audience from the front to the rear, continued: "Christian III, King of Denmark and ruler of Norway, had introduced the religious innovation. The Catholic priests were exiled and replaced by Protestant preachers. The parish of Solum, to which this district was tributary, received as clerical intruder an ex-soldier, a Dane, by the name of Powl; as a matter of course, he governed his parish with the sword rather than with the spirit. Not long after his induction he noticed that his parishioners were loathe to hear him preach. Presently he was informed that from time to time a light was visible in a sea-grotto in the vicinity. Much as he tried he could not solve the phenomenon. Late one evening, on the Vigil of St. Michael, Sept. 28th, the light again appeared. Powl with some companions in arms hastened thither and descending the rock entered the cave.

"There before an improvised altar lighted with candles, a venerable priest vested for Mass was offering up the Most Holy Sacrifice in the presence of the interloper's reputed congregation. 'Enter in peace!' the old priest welcomed the renegade Powl. But the apostate, furious, snatched the sword from his scabbard and seizing the holy priest by the left arm, while overwhelming him with calumnies and terrible threats, was ready to slay him."

Every word of the speaker was feverishly listened to; he went on with the story: "The white-haired priest loosed himself for a moment from the grasp of the usurping minister and looking him in the face, addressed him solemnly: 'I am Sylvester, the lawful shepherd of this flock, the last Catholic priest to tarry in Norway. The old, holy faith which has made this great country what it is, has been stolen from the people; the sanctuaries of our Church have been despoiled and destroyed, its priests banished. I could not and would not leave my children and hence I withdrew to this cavern where until I die, I mean to minister to them.'

"The aged priest continued: 'You say that by sorcery I constrain the people to follow me. I am an old man and must soon appear before my Judge; the prayers which I recite, the Holy Sacrifice which I offer up at night on Sundays and festivals for the salvation of my flock, this is the witchcraft which I practice. Now you know all. This is the only charm that draws the children round their aged spiritual father; spare them, reek your vengeance on me; bury your sword in the bosom of the Last Anointed One of this unfortunate land; I am ready; I am prepared to die here!' He folded his hands and bowed his head."

The hall was in expectancy of what the sequel would be. The speaker, moved by the story he was relating, paused for awhile.

"Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just," the Congregation across the way sang with fervor and enthusiasm. Every word of the inimitable hymn could be distinguished.

Father Philip continued: "The Protestant preacher, that is the ex-soldier, permitted the old saintly priest to finish. Whereupon he returned his sword to the scabbard. 'No,' he said with a mellow voice, 'God forbid that I do violence to an old man. Live and die here, I will leave you in peace and may God be with you when you come to die.'

" 'Yes, so be it,' the priest replied, 'you and I will sorely need God's mercy in that hour.' From that time onward Powl ceased to persecute the Catholics of his parish who chose to follow the faithful priest. The holy man went to his reward on a Christmas day and his parishioners erected him a monument in that grotto by the sea."

With intense interest the men followed the narrator. The magic of the story expelled from their minds all other thoughts; even the speaker halted.

" 'Tis thru the Mediator's grace
Some day we'll see Him face to face;
Who opened heaven's gate again,
Which closèd stood until He came."
the people sang in the church.

A few brief remarks more and Father Philip had finished; the tense silence of the audience was the highest applause that could have been

given him; old and young looked at him with beaming, admiring eyes.

Then the Rev. Pastor got up and thanked him publicly for his fine and most instructive lecture and the people for their attention and behavior. The pastor was about to step off the platform and the people were ready to leave when a voice in the rear of the hall called out: "Your Reverence, I beg to say a word!" It was the baron who had spoken; he was standing composed and dignified by the side of the little table where till now he had been sitting.

"Keep your seats," the pastor addressed his people, "the baron wishes to speak!" The command was unnecessary, for as if paralyzed, not one in the audience moved or left his place. Those who had already gotten up did not think to sit down again, so was their curiosity whetted as to what was coming.

"I also wish to express to Father Philip my thanks for his most interesting discourse," the lord began, "and to state, that in reference to the last anecdote of the speaker, which was meant to apply to me,—at least I construed that to be its purpose,—some explanation on my part is necessary. Most assuredly I am not the man who with drawn sword would attack a Catholic priest or who would persecute the Catholic tenantry of this district like the preacher Powl; on the contrary, as a tolerant Evangelical I respect the religious convictions of every man."

The lord unconsciously hesitated a minute; an oppressive silence dominated the hall. He coughed slightly and proceeded. "That which I did upon my own initiative, I did within my right and no one can say that I have encroached upon the domain of another and still less that I have wished to antagonize the Religion of the people. But, after all, I am a Christian and Advent is as sacred to me as to you. From preacher Powl the Norwegian, my lutheran confrère, I'll take a lesson, nor am I ashamed to acknowledge it. Like him I'll return my sword to its scabbard by saying: Dear people, let us forget what is past; peace is a priceless good, worthy any sacrifice; invaluable to us twice over who are mutually dependent upon one another: Therefore let the quarrels of the past be forgotten and let us join hands again as brethren.

"To prove to you that I am in earnest, I will return the key of Our Lady's chapel of "The Solitude" to the sexton this very evening; as long as I am master of Margenlehn the key will remain in his possession and if you wish you can resume Divine Service there to-morrow morning." His concluding words: "Rev. Pastor and Father Philip, my hand upon it!" were drowned in tumultuous applause of joyful surprise.

The pastor in grateful wonderment exclaimed: "Thanks be to God! Thanks to His Blessed Mother that peace is again restored between the lord, the villagers and the peasantry! Thanks to our generous Sir Baron who has helped to bring it

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about. After the gloomy prospects of the last couple of weeks, how roseate now will Christmas-day break upon this parish! We will never forget your condescension, Gracious Lord, and God will reward you and yours for your kindness! To-morrow morning is Rorate; Father Philip, you will have to officiate thereat."

"It is later than I thought, it is quite dark already," the baron remarked as he left the hall to return to the castle.

"Sir Baron," a voice interrupted, "down at the turn of the road, six men with lanterns are waiting to light you thru the woods and up to Margenlehn."

Accompanied by this half-dozen sturdy volunteers he got safely back to his home.

While the people were still watching to see them off some one remarked jocosely: "Our lanterns could travel the way to the chapel of their own accord, so often have they done duty during the time of Advent."

A neighbor laughed and said: "It is now no longer correct to sing 'the gates stood closed,' but 'are opened again.'"

"Yes, and we must thank Brosi's Philip for the favor," a third speaker observed.

On their way home the old pastor said to the young Religious: "Philip, you did well. You must have known the baron in and out to have fitted a story on to him so perfectly. But, by the way, is that story from real life? Did it happen

as you related it? Or did you shape and adapt the preacher Powl to suit the occasion?"

The Religious answered: "Your Reverence, I would not twist the truth for any cause or purpose; if I had turned the story into a shape different from the original it would have been akin to lying. I related the facts just as I heard them in the North. Moreover, it was not my intention to work upon the baron. I did simply what you asked me to do: told about my travels, but I made a good intention before I began. The sudden and radical change of the nobleman was due to the prayers of the women and children in the church near-by and not to the speaking of your unworthy servant. God forbid that I should claim such honor!"

"In a way, my dear youthful friend, you are right, and God bless you for the lesson you have taught me."

The Sanctuary Lamp

Just outside the city, in the parlor of the little Capuchin convent on the hill, situated let us say on the lake of Constance,—whether or not this is its exact location is of no consequence to the story,—Mrs. Mirius, the widow of a Wholesale Dealer, was facing the haggard, emaciated, old Father Chrysostom. The subject they were talking about was very important.

“So then, if I understand you aright, you had made the vow to consecrate your son to God,” the Religious began, with a stress on each word.

“Yes,—O God—a vow,—well yes, if Your Reverence wishes to call it that; I freely promised. The little one—my Otto was only two years old at the time, the only child—the doctors had given him up, he hadn’t a chance to recover; his convulsions were awful; I was on the verge of despair.”

“Whatever the good God sends is never so extreme as to drive one to despair,” the priest interrupted and corrected her.

“May be, but, all the same, none but a mother can know what anguish it is to watch an only child dying. I didn’t know what to do; agony and fear had deprived me of judgment. In such terrible straits what will a person not promise!

Without deliberation, without looking into the future, I felt willing to give up everything, to make any sacrifice to save him.

"I promised....."

"To God, that if He would spare your son, you would consecrate him wholly to His service in the Priesthood, if that were his vocation."

"Your Reverence, of course, I may have said that in my extremity; indeed, I can't recall the words exactly, but of this I am certain, that at the time I was not fully responsible—most assuredly not. Moreover, who can deny that my fear was exaggerated after all. Otto was not so dangerously sick as I had imagined, and would have recovered."

"Even without the help of God," the Religious added; "that is what you wanted to say, is it not, *Mr. Mirius?*" Taking a snuff-box from his sleeve, he tapped it nervously. "Mrs. Mirius," he continued gravely warning, "show yourself not ungrateful to God and remember that if you recede from what you have voluntarily pledged, He may prove to you in some other way how dependent you and your child are upon His will and pleasure. The sea has swallowed up many a young life."

"In the name of heaven, Your Reverence, what are you saying? I can't bear to hear such words, they are horrible!" To emphasize her protestation and make it effective she stopped her ears with her bediamonded fingers.

"My answer was not too strong to fit your words, *Mrs. Mirius,*" the Capuchin replied;

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"then too, it was meant for your benefit and to warn you. You cannot play fast and loose with God."

"But, Rev. Father, who wishes to do that?" the woman retorted. "I do not mean to take advantage of God; I know what my duty is."

"Your duty, your sacred duty is this, that you place no impediment in the way of your son's vocation and if his aspirations are toward the Holy Priesthood that you help him. It is this duty you wish to shirk. And why? You are a Catholic and ought to know that no vocation is more esteemed or rated higher than the call to the Sacred Ministry, and that such a family is especially favored from the midst of which God chooses a son or daughter for the sanctuary or for the cloister."

"Yes, yes, Your Reverence, that's all beautiful and true enough and you'll find no one who respects and honors the priests more than I do. But it does not necessarily follow from this that I must give up my only child to the Church."

"Mrs. Mirius, no one, and God last of all, compelled you to make the vow to offer your son to Him in case he should be cured; you did that of your own free will."

Thereupon the Wholesaler's widow raised her head proudly and answered: "Your Reverence, at that time, when I—when—the infant Otto was sick unto death, conditions were different. To-day we have the contentions about the Infallibility to meet and the May-Law persecutions to en-

dure; many parishes have turned Oldcatholic and the faithful priests have been penalized. The papers are full of calumnies aimed at the clergy; even on the streets they are not secure against insult. How could I have foreseen all this eighteen years ago? Surely a mother has a right to consider these things when there is a question of the vocation of her child. It is my duty to look out for my only son and safeguard him against all this annoyance."

The Religious smiled. "Mrs. Mirius, Our Lord did not exactly intend His priests to take the first place at banquets and to be politely greeted in the market-place. He did not institute the Priesthood for this purpose. The great High-Priest said: 'The servant is not above the master; if they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you.' It was so from the beginning, it will be so to the end. That is why Our Savior called them His friends; if persecution is rife in our day, remember, woman, it is also the time when heroes are made. What greater glory could you wish for your Otto than the martyr's crown?"

She stopped her ears a second time. "I don't want to hear that at all. I can't even bear the thought that my only one, my darling, should ever be dragged into court, and punished, and reviled in all the papers. Moreover, Rev. Father, who knows whether he would have the fortitude to endure all this? Isn't it possible that perhaps when it is too late, he would regret having become a priest and maybe turn Oldcatholic besides?"

"Now it is my turn to close my ears, Mrs. Mirius," Father Chrysostom replied. "I hope you are not in earnest in appraising the faith and virtues of your good son so meanly."

"All the same, who can tell what might and might not happen. Moreover, Otto has always been physically frail; he is delicate and sensitive in health and by no means ahead of his companions in his books."

"If he does his duty, you can leave the rest safely to Providence. Have you never heard that God chooses the weak in preference and gives his choicest graces to the humble and the lowly?"

"You are unmerciful, Father, you are unbearable," the woman exploded with uncontrollable emotion. "I am the mother of the child and have the first claim on Otto; he is all I have in this world and the sole heir of my possessions. Then, too, there is a duty I owe my ancestry; Otto must continue the family name. Surely for so many reasons a dispensation ought easily to be granted —nor will I be niggardly in remembering the Church by way of compensation. I have—"

"Mrs. Mirius, God prefers obedience to sacrifice. Your son is called to the Priesthood, there is no doubt about it."

"Father, I am willing—"

"Your son Otto—I have known him now for many years and his teachers bear me out—has a decided call to the Sacred Ministry. Which means that God wants him, that God calls him, that God

had destined him to become a priest from the very beginning.”

“Father, I will make a foundation—”

“God’s will is the principal thing. The will of God must decide, Mrs. Mirius. If Otto had no vocation, no one would dream of urging either him or you to obedience and your vow would dispense itself.”

The woman wrung her hands in distress. “I cannot, and I will not—yield my only one! Nor shall the Church be the loser. In Munich I have—”

“My good woman, the great God calls him!”

“When in Munich I saw and purchased a superb Sanctuary Lamp—please, Your Reverence, do not interrupt me and let me finish; it is a grand work of art, of solid silver, which received a prize at the Exposition; this lamp I have bought; it is at the Express-Office; send an employee of the monastery down to get it. In your honor, Father Chrysostom, I will present it to the Abbey Church and with a gift of money sufficient to keep it forever burning.”

The Religious got up and with eyes aflame addressed her solemnly: “Mrs. Mirius, God has not asked of you a soulless receptacle either of silver or of gold but the sacrifice of your son, in whom the fire of zeal and virtue like in a living lamp shall burn for the enlightenment of men.”

“And a golden chalice I will give,” the rich woman ventured to add; in fact, she hardly knew what she was saying and promising.

"Woman, the good God wants no chalice from you but your son as priest," the old Father answered for the last time; "and I think that here-with I have told you all that is necessary. Take back your Altar Lamp, I could not in justice receive it. God cannot be bought off and it is a hazardous thing to oppose His will in any way. You promised Him your son when he was at the point of death; God accepted your vow, brought him back to health and placed within his pure and manly heart the priestly vocation.

"Don't be ungrateful, don't break your promise; help along the plans of God; remember your happiness and that of your child will depend upon it. If you refuse to obey—I will not judge in advance or prophesy the result; still as your Confessor, as your fellow Christian, I beg you, I warn you in the name of God, do not break your vow!"

"Good-by, Father Chrysostom!" the offended woman exclaimed snappishly; she left in a flurry.

Down at Talbach in the chapel of the Venerable Dominican Sisters, in which, on account of its isolation, holy calm and heavenly devotion so alluring and soothing to a troubled heart, reigned at all times, Otto Mirius, the son of the rich worldly widow, was kneeling in prayer. He was a youth in the bloom of life, about twenty years of age, tall and lithe, perhaps too much so for a sound, healthy man,—with a pale and very intelligent face.

Coming in at the door you would hardly have noticed him, for he had chosen a recess in the back of the church directly under the projecting Nuns' choir, where a semi-darkness prevailed even at midday. Here he poured out his heart in fervent colloquies. He told his Savior familiarly of the wish which he had felt from his childhood, of the years of watching, of waiting and longing for the Priesthood, for the exalted vocation which he felt was inseparably interwoven with his welfare. It was the one great aspiration of his soul.

"Four years more, O Lord, four years more, and the gates of the sanctuary will open to welcome me," he sighed; "and yet it is a long time still to wait, but a time so short nevertheless and so necessary: The night is advanced and the day is breaking—procul fugentur somnia, ab alto Jesus promicat,—how sweet will the summons be: 'Ascend ye the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob.' How my heart will be consumed with love, sweetest Savior, when once I am wholly Thine, wholly devoted to Thy service; when my dwelling-place will be Thy holy sanctuary; when Thy mighty welcoming arms will clasp and draw me inviolably to Thy Most Holy Heart; when without alternating between hope and fear, I have the certainty in face of all the world, in face of every obstacle from myself and others, of being irrevocably Thine in the most exalted vocation earth and heaven can show. O Lord, confirm my resolution and permit me not to be unfaithful to Thee! Inflame my heart with

love to Thee; increase in me the spirit of prayer and a longing for solitude. Take possession of my heart and fill my soul with an ardent zeal in Thy service!"

In audible sighs he sent up his appeals, for there was no one in the chapel besides himself. Soon, however, steps were heard on the outside, the door opened, and a flood of light momentarily lit up the somber place.

It was his mother who entered; she had come hither straight from her interview with Father Chrysostom; she knew that Otto was waiting for her here.

After a short prayer she nudged her son and the two left the chapel to return to the city.

"Mama, I would rather not accompany you on this ship. You'll surely permit me to remain for the last one? I would like to ascend Gebhard Peak. The weather is so beautiful."

The mother reflected for a moment and then answered quickly: "Yes, Otto, you may remain to make the ascent, it is worth while. Nor need you go with me to the ferry, it would double the way for you and take too much time. Moreover, I have still some business to attend to which would tire you."

"Just as you like, mama. Well then, good-by, till the night-boat!" They separated; Otto on his way to the peak, the mother directing her steps toward. She was glad to be alone; without the knowledge of her son she could now call for the

Sanctuary Lamp which the Pater had refused, and take it home with her.

At the time this story was unraveling, Mrs. Mirius was residing in an idyllic cottage by the lake with her son Otto, who had just finished his first year of Philosophy at the University, and who in order to recuperate his health which had never been quite satisfactory, was spending his vacation in mountain-walks and sea-bathing. Mother and son had been passing their summer in this way for years with an occasional visit to the Capuchins at Bregenz and to the chapel at Talbach. That is how the somewhat worldly widow got to know Father Chrysostom of whose earnestness and conscientiousness she had this day received ample proof.

It has already been related that eighteen years ago the mother had made a vow that if her son who at the time was sick beyond recovery, were saved, then providing God gave him the vocation she would consecrate him to the Holy Priesthood. This solemn promise did not disquiet the mother in the early years. The child was still young and the fulfillment of the vow was far off as yet; besides, there was a possibility that her first-born might be blessed with sisters and brothers. When, however, in the course of time it became evident that Otto would remain the only child, then she fondly hoped that he would lack the priestly calling and thus absolve her from her pledge. But the more she prayed and had others pray that her wish be fulfilled, and the more she tried to influence her

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son toward a secular career, the more earnestly and persistently did he express his predilection for the Priesthood as the goal of his life. This conflict of hopes on the one side and aspirations on the other, was the cause of many a bitter scene between mother and son. For the present Mrs. Mirius allowed the matter to rest, especially in view of the fact that Otto's frail and sensitive nature demanded great leniency and consideration.

Otto having completed two semesters in Philosophy, it was up to him now to decide what vocation he would follow.

Customarily he should have entered a Theological Seminary immediately, if he aspired to the Priesthood.

It is true, there was a year of obligatory service in the army to face. But this might easily be evaded. However, having been adjudged against all expectations physically eligible, he determined to serve out his year in the ranks before entering upon Theology. In this resolution of her son the mother was fain to see a gleam of hope.

During the interim in the army Otto would not be able to visit church or go to Confession as often as heretofore. His whole mind would be bent upon military tactics; he would be linked to a new circle of friends; he would meet worldlings and Sectarians from everywhere; she had good reason to hope, therefore, that under these altered conditions his "eyes would be opened." The

only thing that might disprove her conclusion was the will-power and tried character of her son.

It was late this beautiful afternoon when she returned from Bregenz visiting Father Chrysostom to Lindau by sea. Sentinel Rock and the adjacent hills were mirrored in the glassy, deep-green waters of the lake; off to the left the little church and cemetery of Wasserburg shimmering with a golden haze, emerged like a magic isle from the deep. But Mrs. Mirius was oblivious of all around her. The words of the Religious had burnt into her soul; there was a struggle going on within her, between wounded vanity and shame because the Religious had so briskly refused her lamp and an indefinable fear of the consequences her stubbornness might entail upon her son.

She had hardly seated herself in the hotel-park, a half-hour after the landing of the ship, when a number of friends found and greeted her; they were nearly all from the Metropolis. Mrs. Mirius was well-to-do and the mother of an only son,—this was quite sufficient to make her company most desirable to the purse-proud ladies of high extraction and their daughters.

“What has become of Master Otto?” the leader of the circle, Her Excellency, the widow of the State-Councilor, asked. “He is like the rest of the young men nowadays; he has remained on the other side in order to enjoy himself unchaperoned by his mother.”

"I suppose he wishes for the last time to make use of his freedom to the full before putting on the King's uniform," one of the women answered.

"Ah, Mister Otto, in soldier's straps for a year, how charming!" a sweet sixteen exclaimed. "Where will he serve out his year?"—"Of course in Ulm." "What service will he join?"—"Will he move into quarters this coming autumn?"—"We'll have a grand farewell dinner then, no doubt."—Such were some of the remarks of the interested girls and mamas. Her Excellency gave a turn to the conversation by inquiring: "I take it for granted, young Mister Otto will join the Cavalry?"

Mrs. Mirius confessed that she had never even given it a thought. Eagerly they overwhelmed her with information of the advantages and distinction of serving in the Cavalry, especially as a one-year recruit; the superb uniform, the gorgeous mount, the variety of arms of burnished steel; but above all, the select company: hereditary count X., baron Y., Mr. Z., son of the President of the Chamber of Commerce; a couple captains of horse, the one an intimate friend of Lady This, the other of Lady So-and-So; moreover, the cavalry-man is garrisoned in the Capital, where he meets the very cream of society and is welcomed into the first families and choicest company of the highest kind. Such was part of their fulsome praise of this department of the militia, with the constant refrain: "O Mrs. Mirius, Otto must join

the Cavalry! So elegant a youth is born for the saddle."

"I admit, to enter a son into this service cannot be cheaply done," the wife of the President of the Chamber of Commerce observed with emphasis; "I know it from experience."

"That will not bother Mrs. Mirius at all," one of the party observed.

"If Otto wishes to serve out his year in the Cavalry and it will afford him special pleasure," the mother replied with dignity, "I will place no obstacle in his way."

The remarks of her friends had deeply impressed her. She argued that these moneyed gentlemen, proud of their stripes and spurs, would most effectually drive out from the mind of her son all thoughts of the Priesthood. Nevertheless apparently, she permitted Otto to choose whether he would serve among the horse or in the infantry; there was very little risk in her doing so.

It was a beautiful night; the full moon looked down upon the placid lake and gently the breeze came over the waters to the shore where the mother stood awaiting her son who had boarded the last boat. She welcomed him as he landed and immediately proposed a walk thru the park. She talked of many things. He listened as in a dream for he had shortly come from the little chapel yonder at Thalbach; his answers to her interrogatories were brief and listless. Finally she got to the subject of the year's enlistment in the army. Seizing his hand and pressing it she asked sud-

denly and with insistent ardor: "Surely, dear Otto, you will do me the pleasure of joining the Cavalry, the most distinguished of all the military departments?"

Taken by surprise he answered without reflection: "Mother, I haven't given it a thought; however, if it will cause you particular pleasure —why not? Only it is a pity that you did not tell me this sooner; I might then have practiced and perfected myself in horsemanship at the University; as it is, I'll have this to learn to begin with."

"You're a darling boy, after all," the delighted parent spoke pettishly; "proud as I am of you I will be still prouder some day, when as an accomplished rider or perhaps even as cavalry officer in reserve, I will see you astride a proud and prancing steed the cynosure of eyes."

"Please, mother, don't talk that way," the youth replied deprecatingly, half-amused, half-vexed. "Let us go in. I am tired. Gebhard Peak is dragging at my heels; I climbed it by the shortest route."

Mrs. Mirius stayed up late that night. She was elated with her victory. Henceforth she could dispense with that unsympathetic, heartless Capuchin who had talked so roughly to her that morning. She would achieve her purpose in her own way and without his help. Otto, a gay, care-free cavalry-recruit would be withdrawn wholly for at least one year, from all clerical influence and would get to see and enjoy the world,—as a

matter of course in an "honorable way" her conscience added;—when that year would be up, she was convinced he would come to her laughing and say:

"Mama, I have discarded the black robe; I have gotten over my raw and childish enthusiasm." After that he could study for whatever profession he liked. The plan, as she saw it, would work itself out smoothly and without a hitch.

Suddenly she shook with a nervous thrill. From out the black skies a falling star, blazing and evanescent, was hurling itself earthward; in a trice it was extinguished in the pall of darkness which overspread the lake.

"But the Church will lose nothing thereby," the woman said by way of reassurance as she concluded her pleasant meditation. "To-morrow I'll look around for a church to which I'll present my Sanctuary Lamp and other gifts in due time."

A week later a box of respectable size arrived at a little out-mission, addressed to the church of the place. When the priest came the Sunday after to say Mass for the few scattered Catholics of the neighborhood, he was surprised to see this artistic Tabernacle Lamp of solid silver, grand enough and massive to grace any church or Cathedral, which some unknown donor had presented to his little chapel. The receptacle was inscribed: "In perpetual remembrance of the giver who begs the prayer of the priest and his parish."

"The gift is too fine and rather out of place," the priest laughed; "however, it is ours. For the present we have no use for it because the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved here. To keep it suspended in this little oratory would not be advisable, first of all on account of the dust and secondly it would be unsafe to expose so precious an art-work unprotected, in this poor, simple room. The lamp is worth at least 2000 florins. Some one might take a fancy to it in a way we would not like. Therefore we will put it aside carefully till we need it. But on Christmas-night, on Easter, and Corpus Christi day, we'll hang it up in front of the altar and place a light within it so that it may shine in all its glory to the honor of God and the edification of the people."

This was done.

Three months had elapsed of Mr. Otto's one year service in the Cavalry. On the track of the riding-grounds of his barracks several companies were exercising. The one to which Otto belonged was to the fore. A lieutenant was busy teaching the recruits to urge and restrain their horses, so as to keep them to a line perfectly straight.

"Dismount!" he commanded, and in an instant the riders leaped from their saddles and stood next to their horses with one hand at the bridle.

"What's the matter there? Mr. Mirius, can't you keep yourself steady; why are you wobbling so?" the lieutenant reprimanded severely.

Otto Mirius was standing beside his dark bay, with a face terrible to look at: pale as death, dis-

torted; his eyes rolling wildly from right to left at last turned upward till only the white could be seen. His hand in anguish rose slowly to his heart.

“Sub-officer, confound it, look after that man!” the lieutenant shouted. The words were hardly spoken when the youth as if struck by some invisible power fell to the ground; his outstretched arms were swaying from side to side seeking to grasp something; from his breast came a fearful prolonged wail which frightened the very horses and caused them to snort and rear; then with awful twitching and convulsions he writhed in the dust. When some of his fellows had reached him he was lying on his back almost motionless, his glassy eyes staring upward and a rattling sound issuing from his foam-flecked mouth.

“What can be the matter with him? Is it an apoplectic stroke?” the commander inquired. “Surely he can’t be drunk so early in the morning!”

“I beg your pardon, lieutenant, Mirius is a man of good habits,” the sub-officer reported.

In the meantime a number of curious people were attracted to the scene and among them the old veterinarian. One glance at the man on the ground sufficed him and with a knowing look he remarked: “The fellow is an epileptic, Sir Lieutenant.” The doctor who came as soon as summoned, confirmed the words of the old man. In about ten minutes the attack was over

and the unfortunate man began to revive and come to himself. He was helped to his feet and led to his room in the barracks.

His comrades commenting upon the fit, declared that Mr. Mirius had never been attacked in that way before, admitting, however, that he suffered occasionally from fainting spells especially after a long trotting exercise.

"I observed his condition at once," the veterinarian growled; "I sized him up on the instant he came into my squadron. What business had he at all to join the Cavalry?" "Don't you know," said the farrier, "it is a man's privilege to aspire to what's beyond him. The lordling wanted to become a rider at all costs; now he is done for."

"He is a ladies' man not a horseman; he ought to have remained with his mother!—Let him ride on a Merry-go-round!—But so it is; every chap who has money must join the Cavalry!" Such were the comments interchanged, after Otto Mirius had been taken to the hospital.

Here he remained under medical supervision for several weeks; malingery in his case was out of the question. After ten days he had a second attack; others followed within short intervals. In consequence he was dismissed from the company as unfit after having served seven months. Epilepsy was assigned as the cause. The old stableman said that Otto had not a cavalry-man's constitution and that he was not the first weakling who had been attacked by the

Falling Sickness for his temerity in joining the horse.

Be this as it may, the fact remained that Mr. Mirius, an only son, whose health in the past, it is true, had not been of the best but nevertheless normal, returned to his mother a pitiable epileptic. All that money could do to cure him was done of course, but the terrible affliction would not leave him. The poor youth christian-minded as he had always been, bore up bravely under the appalling visitation to the last. After three years the increasing frequency of the attacks had so affected his reason that his mother almost insane with grief, was compelled against her will to entrust him to an asylum which he was never again to leave.

* * *

Now let us look back a dozen years or so.

The State-Treasurer and his wife were at breakfast in the cheerful Polygon room with its many bay-windows, of their stately house.

The building and ground were Church property "secularized" some eight years before; there was nothing unusual in this; such properties usurped and held by the State were common enough thruout Swabia and Franconia;—these buildings in every case were massive and commodious even those located in the vicinity of small towns.

The treasurer's house was beautiful; it was situated on high ground with a chapel to its rear; on three sides it was surrounded by a garden

which was enclosed with a wall relieved with highly ornamental niches. It was a hot harvest day; the long-stemmed gladiola were still in bloom, the asters in their glory; the dwarfed trees were bent with their load of autumnal blessing. In and out thru the open bays the scented air on zephyr's wings stole past the aged couple to regale them. They took no notice of it.

A servant entered and announced to his master that the Head-Bookkeeper had not as yet turned up at his desk, that he was sick.

"Sick of course!" the treasurer muttered. "He has been carousing as usual at 'The Stag'—that's what ails him."

"He would have remained lying on the ground all night," the servant continued, "had I not helped him to his feet and taken him in. He overexerted himself yesterday in the woods. Fortunately, I awoke this morning at four o'clock, just as he was trying to get into the house; but he could not manage it, he fell to the ground exhausted. I picked him up and carried him to bed; for to-day he is done for. However, Sir, you need not concern yourself about him."

"That's all right, Peter, don't tell anybody about it, you can go." Then turning to his wife, the official said: "It's a serious matter. If I report him, he'll be thrown out because he is on his last probation and then he'll go to the dogs. If I pass it by, I have reason to be afraid that his disorderly bookkeeping will bring me into trouble. You would think he would have spared me this, especially now when I am tortured with

this chronic headache. If only our little Sophy who made herself so adept an accountant by her own efforts, were still with me, I could afford to let the fellow go. The old man finished with a groan.

His wife looking at him most sympathetically said; "Yes, little Sophy, our darling child, how different it would be if she were still with us! Oftentimes I ask myself: was it necessary? Oh, that she might have remained with us? I miss her at all times and everywhere."

"Well, well, then you feel about it as I do?" the husband remarked. "It is strange, then, that you should have encouraged her in her convent thoughts and plans and have advised me so strongly to let her go. And now that she is far off and among strangers where she wanted to go, you are still not satisfied!"

"O Martin," the woman sobbed, "I never imagined that I would miss my child so! In the kitchen, in the parlor and living-rooms, in the garden, early and late, I am looking for my little Sophy, and as her absence grows from week to week, the more unbearable it becomes. Is it possible that fourteen weeks have already elapsed! On Whit-Monday it was."

The old husband bowed sadly. "Yes, yes, the house seems to be uncanny at times, it's so quiet since the child is gone, so still and quiet; she has taken with her a part of ourselves. It was much indeed that was asked of us; too much!"

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"Much, yes, but not too much, Martin. God never asks more than one can give. You yourself have said it more than once: 'Our Lord wants the maiden, we cannot refuse Him;' He could have taken her away from us entirely."

"Like the five sleeping out there in the cemetery," he replied; "however, if He had left us at least one—but to be all alone in this large house, in this large garden, is a sore trial. I can't look at the piano anymore where she so often sat and played and sang.—In the office too, how often I imagine the door is about to open with little Sophy tripping in to ask as she was wont to do: 'May I help you a little?' I feel as if I had aged thirty years during the three months she is gone."

"Martin, don't brood over the matter so, it will make the sacrifice all the heavier. Come, your coffee is quite cold." She poured out a hot cup. "It's about time to expect a letter from Sophy again; you'll see from it how happy she is, how suited to her vocation; surely this will give you pleasure and ease your heart."

"Well yes, just so she is happy—one great anxiety is lifted from us, at all events, the child is secured and provided for body and soul to the end of her life. Then, too,—had she married, we would be alone as now. If only I were well again and could work as formerly!"

"Martin, your sufferings will pass away by and by; you have simply overworked yourself."

"You're right," he replied, "and besides, there is an easy and direct way out of my difficulties."

"If there is no alternative you will have to let your assistant go; matters of finance require careful handling; none but a reliable man will do."

"I am not referring to my assistant but to myself."

"To yourself? What do you mean, Martin?" she asked with surprise. "Surely you are not planning—"

"Don't be afraid to speak out," he answered; "indeed for several weeks I have been thinking of resigning and asking for a pension. No doubt, it would be a radical and painful step to vacate this beautiful, commodious house, this grand garden... Thirty-four years we have lived here; as bride and groom we came to this place; here our children were born, here they died; every room in the house is full of reminiscences of our married life; it was my hope and wish that we should live in this peaceful home till they carried us out to the graveyard. To move away into rented quarters, amid new surroundings, at our age—will be hard, very hard."

"Martin, why do you look at things in so sad and gloomy a way? Until now you have been a plucky man, holding your head erect and facing the trials of life like a good Christian. You have given the dearest and best we had, our Sophy, to God, without complaining. Believe me, He will not pass that by unrewarded. You have reason to hope that as a recompense He will not forsake you and that He will give you back your health."

And don't you think that the prayers of our child will also count in your favor with God?"

That very moment a servant girl entered with two letters which she laid upon the table.

"From Sophy," the mother exclaimed excitedly, tearing open the envelope and handing the letter to her husband.

The treasurer began to read it. Suddenly his eyes dilated and he betrayed an agitated mind.

"What does she write?" the wife asked. "Has something happened to her?"

"Be patient for a moment," he answered with a troubled voice; "let me first read the other letter also."

"There must be something in it out of the ordinary," she remarked; "it likewise comes from the convent, I can tell from the stamp." Quickly she opened the second letter; her husband read it thru rapidly. Then putting the letter aside and placing his hands upon the table he spoke to his wife in an indescribable tone: "Elizabeth, God will give Sophy back to us."

"What do you say?" she cried, "what do you mean?"

He did not answer. His head dropped to the table and from the very bottom of his heart he sobbed and wept with the immediate result that the melancholy mood which had lately so weighed him down was changed to a happier one.

The woman looked at her husband with consternation. "What does it all mean?" At last when he had calmed somewhat, she took hold

of his hand. "Martin, in the name of heaven, tell me what has happened? Is it a misfortune we have to face? What made you weep?"

"God intends returning Sophy to us, Elizabeth, that's why I wept; she is already on the way and will arrive this very day; I could not control myself; the joy nearly broke my heart. My child, my Sophy, is coming home again! I am all right now and happy."

His wife whispered in reply: "Martin, I see now what it must have cost you to have permitted the child to enter the convent. You must have suffered terribly; I never realized it. But tell me, why does she return so suddenly? What was the trouble that our pious child is sent back to us as unfit for the cloister? Did not Sophy from her very childhood express a longing to join the Sisters?"

Picking up the letter again, the husband replied: "The fault is neither Sophy's nor the convent's; our Lord willed it so and that is all."

He read the letter of the prioress informing the parents that on account of the delicate health of Sophy which could not bear the strain of the heavy routine and strict discipline of the Rule, the council with deepest sorrow was compelled to refuse her admission to the vows. The letter went on to say, that the Superioress, within two weeks after her admittance among the Sisters, was convinced that the pious maiden had a call to the Religious Life. As far as the Rule would justify, their daughter was the favorite of all.

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Her innocence, her happy disposition, her open, artless manner free from all duplicity and guile, her readiness to oblige, her prompt obedience, her ardent zeal in the house and fervent devotion in the chapel, edified the whole Community. The nuns congratulated themselves in possessing one who gave such fair promise for the future—but God willed it otherwise. Before long it was plain that the continual round of work from early morning till late at night was more than her frail constitution could bear.

With heroic effort she tried to keep pace with her duties, among which Choir-attendance at midnight was the most trying, and only with the greatest reluctance did she avail herself of any granted dispensation. However, it became more and more evident to the Superioress, and finally she herself was convinced of it, that in this unequal struggle her health would soon be irretrievably lost. It was as a concession to her earnest pleading for more time, for another trial, that her release had been postponed until now. The whole Sisterhood joined in beseeching heaven to grant her the necessary health to persevere, but all to no purpose. Fearing that by delaying, Sophy might become the victim of some incurable malady on account of her already weakened health, the council was forced to take the final step.

It was a most painful trial to the maiden to be obliged to leave the enclosure where she had tasted such happiness, but with God's grace she

finally submitted to His decree humbly and obediently. The prioress and the whole Community beg the parents to be most guarded not to express any disappointment at the return of their pious daughter from the convent, that God will look after her, and that the nuns will ever cordially remember and pray for her.

With brimming eyes the mother listened to the letter. Addressing the husband she asked: "Martin, what have you to say to this?"

"All I've got to say, and I would gladly sing and cry it out, is: Thanks be to God! Sophy is coming home again, the loneliness of her old parents is relieved; God has heard our sighs and witnessed our misery; He was satisfied with our good will and has returned our gift; for this I will forever thank Him."

"But look and see when we are to expect her; this very day you said."

"There is the letter, read it yourself."

Suddenly there was an exclamation of surprise outside in the main corridor and a loud glad baying of the house-dog.

"She is here already," the mother cried, rushing to the door. Before she could open it a maiden entered, tall in size and dressed in black. Weeping, the mother clasped her child in her arms; a moment after Sophy knelt at the knees of her father. "Our dear Lord could not use me in the convent. He has sent me back to you, dear father, and to you, good mother," she said, as the tears streamed from her brown, smiling

eyes. "Now then, you'll take me back, will you not, and, father, I'll be permitted to help you at the books as heretofore?"

"Yes, my child, and blessed be the day that has restored you to us. All is right now, God has not forgotten us. He could have sent us nothing better than you."

"But let me take a look at you, Sophy," the mother said, the while regarding the spiritualized face of her daughter; it had become somewhat thinner and paler than it was a year ago. A roseate hue tinted her countenance as she told her mother that according to the physician's statement she was sound and whole but too delicate to fulfil the obligations of the Religious Life; that she was therefore obliged to leave and told to give up the idea forever of becoming a nun.

She was weeping bitterly. The father placing his hand on her head said: "Child, don't allow that to grieve you. It is God's will once and for all that it should be so; He will comfort you. You can live piously and retired in the world too, as many are doing. For my part you can draw up a little rule of life and live like a Religious as far as this is possible at home. The principle thing is that you are with us again; when once you are better acquainted with the particulars of my situation, you will understand how wisely God has ordered it all."

Sophy remained with her parents and the dark clouds which had threatened their future were dispelled. From the very first she helped her

father in his less difficult accounts and cheered him by her presence so that his chronic headaches disappeared in a short while. Soon after this, his worthless assistant who had become an incorrigible drunkard, was dismissed and Sophy took his place. In spite of all her work, however, the pious girl kept up her spiritual exercises, which with the advice of her prudent Confessor she had agreed upon. Especially dear to her was the visit to the Blessed Sacrament at the close of day; then did her face show the happiness she felt and the house was made gayer and blither on her return. Her father had given up the idea to retire on a pension; with renewed vigor he worked and lived with the prospect in view that he would continue in his present home until death.

That day came, of course, in due time. Husband and wife followed each other to the grave within a short interval; they are resting beside their departed children. Sophy was left behind an orphan. The Treasury Building was given over to a new officer and a new assistant.

The good God however protected Sophy but not in some extraordinary way or by a miracle. Released from all pressing and torturing anxiety, she moved to a wholly Catholic town, where, unknown to all excepting a few friends, she was free to serve God in retirement. Here she found what she had been seeking: a hidden life, an opportunity of assisting at Mass daily, of visiting the Blessed Sacrament as often as she pleased, of

hearing the sermons and the inspiring chant during the solemnities on Sundays and festivals and lastly of finding a tried and pious Spiritual Director for her soul.

"God is leading me by the hand securely," she used to say; "I am not deserving of it and can never thank Him enough." In this way "Miss Sophy" continued the life of a Religious even in the world. She died as she had lived—peacefully and happy. As might have been expected of one of her frail constitution, she did not reach an old age. At the time of her burial just a dozen years had elapsed from the day she had returned to her father and mother from the convent.

* * *

It was a raw day in November, the Feast of St. Clement of Rome, a disciple of the Apostles. Stray flakes of snow, the harbingers of winter, were whirling thru the air. On this day the poor little mission-parish, at the very end of the diocese, was in festive attire. The former chapel of a single room had been replaced by a pretty little church; the bishop was thru with the blessing and had introduced to the parish its first resident pastor

After the Dedication he met and greeted many of the families of the new parish and all the visiting priest. "I am especially pleased to find you here, Rev. Pastor," the bishop addressed one of the oldest priests, "because you had the farthest to travel."

"Your Grace, I was more or less obliged to come," the priest replied, "and if you will permit I will explain why."

The Rev. Gentleman had this to tell: "About three months ago a young lady who was exceptionally pious, died in my parish. From her childhood up this good, lovable maiden was the joy and pride of all that knew her and especially of her parents the State-Treasurer N. and his wife. She had a call to the Religious Life and in fact, had entered the Convent N. in Westphalia; but on account of her delicate health she was advised to return to her home. Since the death of her parents she has been a member of my Congregation and I can attest that by her piety and model life she did a great deal of good to my people.

"She was one of the holiest souls I have ever met. When she realized that consumption was hurrying her to an early grave, she disposed of all the money she had, for good purposes. A week before her death she said to me: 'I have given away all I possess excepting one bill which in remembrance I have kept until now. This note my father gave me the Christmas before his death. He told me at the time: 'Sophy, you have been my assistant and secretary now for five years; only for you I would have had to resign long ago. You have received no wages for your work but I have not forgotten you. Five years at 300 marks a year, makes 1500 marks; here they are.' Saying which he handed me a five-hundred-dollar bill; inspite of my refusal he made me take

it. 'Now then,' the pious soul continued, 'I did not know what the money should be applied to after my death. One day before the Holy Tabernacle I besought Our Lord to enlighten me. Of a sudden my gaze was fixed on the little red flame in the Sanctuary Lamp and I resolved then and there to leave the money as a fund to keep the holy light perpetually burning.'

"The happiest hours of my short, poor life have been spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; it is impossible for me to tell the graces, the comforts, the joys, I have received there of my Blessed Savior. During all eternity in heaven I will not be able to thank Him for what thru His Most Holy Presence He has given me during my life. Near Him I found my last and only solace when my health was declining even until now when I am ready to die. Jesus has been my All to me during these trying years. Therefore, I concluded, when once I am no longer able to kneel to adore Him, to love, to praise Him, to be consumed for Him, the little ruddy flame must night and day, glow and burn and speak for me. It will typify my heart which in heaven will never cease to love and praise its Savior. It will tell Him what my throbbing heart struggles to express; He will know what the tiny red flame means to say for me.'"

The old priest was moved to his heart as he told the story and his voice sank to a whisper.

From his pocket he withdrew an envelope. "Here is the note of Miss Sophy to fund the

Sanctuary Light in perpetuity in this chapel. It was the deceased herself who had suggested that the money be given to a poor neglected chapel rather than to a rich parish-church in a city. Therefore I am here," the city pastor added. "As soon as I had read the notice of this Church Dedication" he concluded, "my mind was made up. From this day onward the Blessed Sacrament will be kept in reserve in this Tabernacle and this Mission-chapel therefore will be funded according to the wishes of the pious departed maiden. The gorgeous lamp which I see on the altar will be a most suitable receptacle for the light."

"I, too, have admired that superb work of art," the bishop remarked. The mission-priest then explained to him and the visitors that some unknown donor had sent it to his parish some years ago. No one has ever found out who it was. The express-box was labeled "From Lindau," and the lamp was inscribed "in perpetual remembrance of the giver."

"Well, then, let us thank God," the bishop said, "and pray for the souls of the parties who without ever having met, have completed each other's gifts by presenting this church a lamp and a light. And surely, Rev. Pastor, no one who has listened to your story of the pious girl will forget to pray for her; God will reward her richly with His heavenly light for having kindled this little flame to His honor on this earth... It could hardly have been a mere coincidence that this grand lamp was sent by that other donor to

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this very church for which the light is founded to-day.

"No vessel which is used in God's service can be too rich and grand, nor can it be too beautiful to hold and perpetuate the symbol of that fire which burnt in the heart of the pure and innocent girl.

"I congratulate the church and the parish on the twofold gift and am certain that as the two benefactors have united in keeping the lamp in this chapel forever burning before the Blessed Sacrament, this congregation in gratitude will forever keep their memory aglow."

* * *

The unfortunate Otto Mirius afflicted to the last died a peaceful death in the asylum; he was resigned, nay almost happy when the hour of his release had come. His mother also is dead. It was said that the loss of her only son had broken her heart; it was remorse of conscience rather, for having urged him to join the Cavalry. In her anguish and long before the end she had recourse again to Father Chrysostom; he consoled her as best he could and reconciled her with God.

Suspended before the altar of the little mission church the rich Sanctuary Lamp glows with its calm, ruddy light; as a lone sentinel—with the exception of the priest, his sister, and an occasional worshiper—it watches in presence of the Blessed Sacrament during the long sunlit days of summer and the dark, bleak days of winter.

And while the oil afame is consuming itself in honor of the Sacramental Lord, two souls are prone in adoration before Him, that of the youth whose wish for the Priesthood was foiled and that of a maiden to whom the boon to live and die in the cloister was refused, a boon for which she sighed until her heart was stilled in death.

The Bellows-Blower

A dark December night. Thru a dense settling mist which had brought the day to a premature close a team was rattling along the highway past dormant plains and leafless orchards, frightening the casual crow from its roost.

The mist increasing to an icy drizzle and the cold becoming more intense, the lone traveler enveloped himself more closely in his furs and mufflers; half-buried in a buggy-robe and protected by an oilcloth, he pressed snugly into a corner of the vehicle and continued his musings with perfect unconcern about the road and the weather, evidently trusting that his coachman and the fast-trotting steeds would bring him safely to his destination, namely, to his home which was yet a far way off.

It was Bronnhart, Chief Steward of Manor Erbstein, who was returning home from the Capital. Business had called him to the city, for it was coming on to Christmas. Having finished

his work, he as a one time officer in the army, was invited to attend a dinner gotten up in his honor at the Casino by his former military comrades. Among the subjects spoken of and commented on at this social gathering, the steward could single out only one that had struck him and caused him to ponder.

In the course of conversation the gentlemen came to speak of the young Prince Maximilian who had been recently promoted in the army, and who was very popular and esteemed by all for his military virtues. The mention of his name gave occasion for one of the younger officers to remark: "I am an enthusiastic admirer of Prince Max but upon one point he is a riddle to me: he prays with his children at night. If that is true, I can't reconcile it with the intelligence and manliness becoming a Cavalry Chief; it is a riddle to me."

A grimace of disdain and mockery distorted the faces of several of the younger men as they spoke in turn: "It is simply impossible!"—"Ridiculous!"—"Legendary!"

To these shallow remarks an elderly colonel who had presided at the feast, replied stoutly and emphatically: "Now then, that's enough; Prince Max can do as he pleases inside his home; whether he plays hobby-horse on all fours for his youngest boy or prays with his children at bed-time, is nobody's business. What happens within the sanctuary of the family ought never to be dragged before the public; it is a matter too sacredly personal."

This snub routed the young fellows thoroughly. They sought protection behind the weak apology that it was far from their minds to criticize or decry Prince Max.

It was this little episode Bronnhart was thinking about in the buggy. A new world had been revealed to him. Constantly, with the eye of his soul, he saw before him the blooming, athletic prince, the punctilious officer, the accomplished gentleman, praying at night with his wife and children; and, strange to say, the picture appealed to him as in perfect harmony; the knightly prince blended wonderfully with the praying husband and father. All seemed so natural.

And just as natural was it that after looking at this mental image of the prince, the steward should revert to a picture of himself. He, too, was a father. His oldest child, Beatrice, was ten, his son, Jack, seven years old. Their mother, his wife, whom he had married very young, was dead more than a year. The mother-in-law with her youngest daughter was taking care of his home for the present. He and they and the people at large were of the opinion that the young sister-in-law would in due time become his second wife and stepmother to his orphaned children.

But now suddenly his plans were halted by a something he had never thought of. His deceased wife, educated in a fashionable neutral boarding school, had taken after her mother, and had never really prayed with her children. The couple

stanzas of pious maxims which she had taught them and occasionally asked them to recite, was surely no praying. The mother-in-law knew little about Religion and her youngest daughter even less. He himself until now had never bothered about the subject nor given it a thought.

To-day, Religion and prayer had been presented to him in a new light. The young prince, the distinguished officer, prays with his children, prays at home! The scene would not vanish from his mind and the longer he looked at it, the deeper the impression it made. Then, too, he was charmed and startled by the old colonel's phrase: "The sanctuary of the family!" He had seen the words in print many a time but without realizing their import; now for the first time he understood them. Indeed, that, and that alone, is a family-sanctuary where father, mother and children, unite in common prayer. This is something not only beautiful and touching, it is much more, he soliloquized; it is the heart, the soul, the very center and foundation of family-life.—

December! The heavens were shedding the graces of the holy Advent Season upon mankind. It is true, the torpid earth with its shroud of somber, chilling fogs, the killing winter, all nature dying or dead,—rested depressingly upon the mind and soul of men. But it was Advent and thru the darkness of the winter night the dawn of Christmas day could be descried; the Magnificat of Advent sung by angels' voices sweet and low, amid the dreary silence, amid the rustling

of the inhospitable winter-winds and rain and snow, could be heard.

With the same spirit which animated the Immaculate Virgin nineteen hundred years ago when with a heart exuberantly happy she praised herself as blessed among women, does Holy Church bearing the Incarnate Son of God in her bosom, speak and jubilate thru the wintry Advent weeks, with the Holy Night in view.

And inversely, what the Church sings and expresses during this blessed time in her prayers and hymns and psalms and lessons, but most of all in the Sacrifice of the Mass, is contained in that first inimitable Magnificat of Mary: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior—for He hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaid,—for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed—For He that is mighty hath done great things unto me—and holy is His name and His mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear Him." This is the mystery of Advent, the spirit that pervades the holy season, filling the hearts of the faithful with sacred promises, solemn admonitions, and sweet peace. The whole ritual of the Church and the ardent devotion of the faithful is in substance but an expansion of the wonderful Magnificat, that grand Canticle of expectation, that world-cry of humanity for the Savior. Our hearts were made for God and only in possessing Him will they find rest.

The lone traveler speeding thru the murky twilight was tortured more than ever before with

this primal hunger of our race. Looking back to the days of his devout youth, he asked himself the question: "Why should not my children enjoy the same advantages?" and that other one which arose simultaneously: "And why should I not pray with mine as does the young prince with his?" But the thought of the mother and sister-in-law unnerved him. He was not alone with his children, he had them not to himself; the women, the relatives, were strangers nevertheless, who shared with him his children's love and confidence. Their very presence discouraged and chilled all real fervent prayer. Their want of faith was uncongenial and averse to all piety, prayer, meditation and filial union with God. They had lost all sense for the spiritual. Under such conditions, how would it be possible to have prayer in common? Their pride, the first offspring of religious indifference, had polluted the pure atmosphere of his home and infected and destroyed the children's intuitive longing for God. The more he studied the matter, the more was the unfortunate man convinced of the truth of his reflections. What could he do? In proportion as his conscience urged him his anguish of soul increased.

Night had come. The barouche went rumbling thru the village, past the church and its spectral tower, and finally up the drive-way which led to the ancient castle of the Counts von Erbstein. The manor-house was a large, massive building that had been added to from year to year. It

was richly furnished within and had ample accommodations for the members of the family and for a large number of guests. The rooms, however, were seldom occupied. The count and his family spent most of their time in the Capital and what was left of leisure was given to traveling; it was often a matter of years before they returned to Erbstein, and then for a short period only. Therefore the parlors, the reception-rooms, the grand suites, the halls and corridors were generally dark and silent; the shutters remained closed, the large windows without curtains; dimly the steps of the Overseer grated on his ear whenever on his round of inspection, he walked the carpetless floors. Only one part of the castle, a long wing somewhat lower than the main-building and extending into the park, was occupied. Bronnhart, the steward and treasurer of the Erbstein Estates, resided here; his office-room was at the extreme end.

The steward got out of the barouche and entered the house; he was welcomed by his mother—and sister-in-law, then by Beatrice and Jack. Passing thru a nicely furnished parlor, he went to the dining-room where the table lay spread for supper.

“And where is Waldo?—Come, Waldo!” he coaxed.

The brow of “Madam,” this was the title assumed by the mother-in-law, clouded. “You’ll keep him outside the room, will you not, dear Al-

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fred?" she asked. "That untrained, repulsive dog makes me nervous."

"Let him come in a moment, what difference will it make?" the man replied; "Waldo, where are you hiding?"

"Waldo, Waldo!" the children urged and commanded at the same time.

But no dog appeared.

"I'll bet he's lying below the warm kitchen-stove," the woman scolded. "How often have I forbidden Betty to let the brute into the room!"

Without further ado Jack ran to the kitchen calling for the dog; he returned with a sad face: "Waldo is gone—he has not been around the whole evening."

"He is visiting Lenz the cobbler, perhaps," the father suggested.

"Just wait," the mother-in-law threatened, "I'll knock that running away out of him, even if it costs me a new switch."

"Perhaps he is homesick," the kindhearted Beatrice remarked.

"His old mammy and little brothers are at the shoemaker's; I suppose he wanted to play with them awhile."

"The dog's place is here and not in the shoe-shop," the woman retorted. "The cobbler would do better to feed his children than his dogs."

"Shoemaker Lenz is losing nothing on his dogs," the steward observed; "he is raising full-blooded terriers and it pays him well. That Waldo is a thoroughbred of that breed, his intractability

proves. A genuine terrier has a head of his own. Now then—let us begin supper! Afterwards you, Beatrice, and you, Jack, will go to the cobbler and bring back Waldo. It's not the first time."

"All right, papa!" the children shouted with dancing eyes, only too glad to go, altho it was quite dark outside and the snow was falling.

Old Betty, the cook, muttered to herself back in the kitchen: "No wonder Waldo runs away! He's only a pup, not half-grown yet and naturally likes to play with his own kind and lie with them socially under the cobbler's stove. Moreover, there is really no place for him here; he is barred from the kitchen; if he is caught in the parlor or sitting-room he is whipped by the old woman and the young one; the latter by the way is getting to be just like her mother; if Waldo stays in the corridor, he soils it, they say. The children, much as they would like to, are forbidden to pet him and especially to play with him. Whenever the old woman sees the pup, 'Scat!' she says, 'Get out of here, you brute!'

"If the dog, trying to ingratiate himself, wags his tail, leaps at and fawns upon her, his only reward is a kick. No wonder, Waldo, runs away. This afternoon without even touching his food, he jumped out the open kitchen window—homesickness drove the poor creature away."

Jack and Beatrice went to the last house in the village. It was a one-story building, the home of the village shoemaker. The single roof covered

also a little stable and hayloft; back of the house was a small grass-plot and a few old fruit-trees.

There was a light streaming thru the windows. The two children knew what they were about for it was not the first time they had called here. Stealing to the window they peeped into the room. The family was singing. They knocked. The cobbler opened the door and admitted them. Six perky dogs at the same time greeted them in unison. "Waldo, Waldo! don't you know us?" the children exclaimed.

A half-hour later they left the shoemaker's house and passed thru the village on their way home. Brosi, the cobbler's son, escorted them. To size him up exteriorly, the latter was by no means handsome because he was overgrown; a pair of dark, moody eyes shone languidly from a rather melancholy face; his head was sunk between the projecting blades of his broad, powerful shoulders; his arms seemed to be too long—in a word, poor Brosi was misshapen; the spectral light of the lantern exaggerated his deformities still more.

Lighting the children's way with one hand, for it was quite dark, with the other, he was carrying the amused and quite satisfied Waldo.

"I am carrying him," he said, "so puppy will get home with clean paws. Don't abuse him. Be kind to him and give him a warm nook to sleep in and he'll stay; if he has to shiver thru the night, he'll run away. He is short-haired and therefore very sensitive to cold."

They had passed the houses and had come to the castle which was not far from the church; in fact, a pathway connected the two.

The first to meet them upon their arrival at Bronnhart's was old Betty, who could not hide her joy upon seeing her little pet Waldo. But the very next minute the door opened and Miss Trude, the steward's sister-in-law, approached quietly with a whip in her hand.

"Don't harm Waldo, don't harm him!" Brosi and the children begged; the little pup lay prone on the floor, humbly wagging his tail as if imploring mercy. Quickly Miss Trude seized the little dog by his collar and began beating him unmercifully, the poor beast yelling with pain.

With an angry face Brosi had looked on till now, then stretching his arm protectingly over the animal and without regarding the two or thee lashes the senseless woman had unwittingly given him, he said: "Please stop, it is not the fault of poor Waldo that he feels homesick!"

With inexpressible astonishment at his interference, paired with supreme contempt, she mutely mustered Brosi. Turning to the children she said: "You could have found your way back thru the village yourself; that is why the two of you were sent;" then in an imperious tone she said to the man: "You can go! But understand in future that this dog has been paid for and is not to be coaxed away."

"Brosi carried Waldo in his arms so that he might soil nothing in the house," Beatrice in-

terposed. "Yes, and he lighted us with his lantern all the way," the boy added. The children spoke stubbornly and defiantly.

"You could have told me that sooner," Miss Trude replied. "All the same, we are under no obligations—to him."

Taking a tempence from her purse, she meant to give it to Brosi. He, however, was already outside the house. Even after the whipping had ceased the dog kept on a-howling.

This brought the steward upon the scene. "Miss Trude," he said with evident displeasure, "that's not the way to teach a dog to love his home."

"To love his home—a dog!" she exclaimed with deep astonishment.

The family remained together after supper but Bronnhart was not in a communicative mood. "Poor Alfred has overworked himself to-day he is tired," the mother-in-law remarked.

"Shall Trude play something for you on the piano, Alfred?" she asked.

Bronnhart nodded affirmatively. The music would save him the trouble of talking. The maiden went to the piano and for a while filled the room with loud, tiresome runs and chords from various difficult, soulless pieces. The delighted mother looked at her daughter with pride and bade the grandchildren who were playing Checkers, to stop the game and listen to the music because it was so elevating and refining. At last, at last, the maiden had finished; she had gone over all

the latest and best modern compositions, the grandmother asserted.

"Now you can take up your game again," she advised the children, while taking her seat at the table next to Mr. Bronnhart, with Trude on her left. Beatrice, who was sitting at a small table with her brother, resented the rude interruption of the Checkergame. "I don't feel like playing anymore if it must be done on command," she whispered to little Jack, who looked at her tired and listless.

Their elders after many attempts at last got into some connected conversation. The steward spoke of what he had done that day.

"There is no trouble with the Money Orders," he began; "the bank looks after them without any risk to me or to the count. But to-day, the countess sent me word to express to her residence in the Capital her diamond set and all the jewels that go with it. She wishes to wear the brilliants at certain functions during the holidays. This is taking great chances with the stones these busy days before Christmas. Perhaps the safest thing would be if I brought her the box personally."

Miss Trude was overcome with surprise and curiosity.

"A treasury of diamonds—necklace, bracelets, earrings? And you have never told me a word about it, Alfred! You have these jewels in charge? Where are they? Can't I take a look at

them?—and mama? Please, Alfred, let us see them—I am awfully curious.”

A shadow crossed the face of the man.

“Wouldn’t you like to count the gold and finger the bills in the chancery-safe also?” he asked.

“Aha—the diamonds are in the large villa-safe! Did I guess right?” Trude asked triumphantly.

“I knew that long ago,” the mother said, “and there are other valuables there besides—heirlooms worth hundreds of thousands.”

“Alfred, you have been mean and ugly to have kept such dazzling gems under lock and key without saying a word about them to us daughters of Eve.”

“Who knows but that in the end one of you daughters of Eve might purloin a piece of this jewelry?” the steward jokingly remarked. “Of course only with your eyes and with your heart!”

Then more seriously he added: “I’ll open the safe for no one, not even for you, I swore this to the count. But to-morrow, after I have withdrawn the jewels, I’ll give you a look at them, but mind you, don’t mention it to anybody!”

“Does the custody of all this wealth never cause you any anxiety?” the mother-in-law asked.

“Who would search for it here? Moreover, the safe is built into the wall and fire-proof. The windows of the Treasury are iron-barred and the only access to the room is thru our front door and along the one corridor, at the left end of which are our living rooms. Then, too, I keep a loaded

revolver and a gun near my bed, and Jacob, who sleeps close to the vault, is also armed for any emergency that may arise."

"Do you really intend to take the casket of jewels to the countess yourself?"

"The more I think of it, the safer it seems to me," he replied. "The safest way is not over-safe."

"It would mean a long journey, Alfred," the old woman complained; "it would take several days, that is what I regret about it. Trude and I would miss you sorely—and the children too," she added.

"What else can I do? I know that even with the fastest train, the trip will take three days. By to-morrow I'll tell you exactly what I will do. Maybe I'll take Jacob with me so as to have a companion on hand in an emergency. He is not young anymore, it is true, but he is prudent and closemouthed, and will hold his own against anybody."

"We two women and the children will be left all alone then in the house. Brother-in-law, I and shivering already!" Miss Trude exclaimed.

"I tell you what, Trude, make Waldo your friend, he is an excellent watchdog," the steward advised somewhat mischievously. "However, haven't you the gardener near-by at your beck and call. Besides, no one will know that we are gone."

"Papa, to-morrow morning there will be *Orate Devotions* in the church," little Jack interrupted

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loudly, "please, may I and Beatrice attend? Tell Betty to wake us at five o'clock."

"Child, who put that thought into your head?" the grandmother inquired straightening to her full height and with her eyelids and brows uplifted. "Surely that's nothing for children!"

"O yes, grandma, all the children are welcome and are glad to go. I heard about it at the cobbler's; it is most beautiful, the many lights on the altar and the sweet hymns; the whole church is filled. Papa, can't we go also?"

Before he could reply the old granny spoke again: "No, Alfred, you'll agree with me, you'll not say yes to such a notion, will you? It would be dangerous for the children. To get them up so early, send them out into the cold night air and permit them to stay for an hour in an icy church —would be most foolhardy. They might contract Pneumonia before you knew it and you would be to blame. As their grandmother I have a right to interfere."

"And to think of it—Lenz the cobbler!" Miss Trude chimed in.

"The cobbler's children are certainly not fit companions for ours. It is pity enough that the stupid dog came from over there. They are proletarians body and soul—the dozen children large and small, are without decency or manners, and untruthful, dirty and lazy. And the wife—all she thinks of is to hustle her miserable brood out of bed early in the morning and send them off to church. She herself is nothing but a devotee.

Every morning of every God-given day, weekdays as well as Sunday, she is seen in church, so our Betty says, and she doesn't lie. If that isn't the height of bigotry and fanaticism and idiocy! But that's the kind of woman she is: just so she can begin the day running to church, saying the Rosary and hanging her head—what difference does it make what becomes of her house and home! What must the condition at the cobbler's be when she, the wife and mother, spends an hour a day squatting on her heels! That's not Christianity, that's sheer ignorance and neglect of duty; such doings will weaken and ruin any family."

Without commenting on the maiden's tirade, Bronnhart looked lovingly at his children whose expectant eyes were awaiting an answer.

"May we go to the Advent devotions, the Orate, Papa?" the boy again begged insistently.

"You must say *Rorate*," he answered. "Do you know, children, how often a week they have these services?"

"Three times, papa: Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, at half past five in the morning!"

"Well then, you don't have to begin to-morrow already. I'll tell you upon my return what days you may go." This answer satisfied neither side.

Mother and daughter looked at each other abashed. Beatrice clenching her little fist whispered to herself aside: "I thought so!" Jack hung his head.

"You can look over the *Fashion Journal*, children," aunt Trude said, laying the magazine on their diminutive table. "It will help you off your hobby."

Backing up her daughter, the grandmother sagely added: "It is not right to encourage or follow a fad." In the meantime the cards were got ready.

The room was silent. The children were looking at the fashion plates mechanically, while their elders were absorbed in the game of Whist.

"Where does Waldo sleep to-night?" little Jack asked.—"I don't know, probably in the wood-shed," Beatrice replied.—"He'll get the chills there surely."

"Oh, Betty no doubt, has made him a snug bed."

"He'll get homesick if he's locked up by himself."

Moodily Beatrice nodded assent. That very minute a long piteous wail was heard.

"It's Waldo," the boy exclaimed.

"He's cold, we'll go out and look after him!" Beatrice volunteered.

"Stay where you are!" the grandmother strictly commanded. "You must not spoil the dog. He's got to get used to it."

A second whining howl followed. Then there was dead silence. Suddenly the children began to sob and to weep as if their hearts would break.

"That's the result of their associating with the trashy cobbler's children!" Trude remarked in an icy tone.

"Children, go to bed," the father ordered. While they were gliding from the room, granny helped them repeat a short, pious, jingling "Night Prayer" in rhyme. They were in their beds about a quarter of an hour, when the little brother got up and tip-toeing to his sister's bed whispered in her ear: "Beatrice, at Mr. Lenz's the shoemaker, it is much nicer than here. I wish I were the cobbler's boy!" In an undertone they talked a while longer, telling each other their grievances and resolves; then the little fellow went back to his bed.

In the dreams of the children that night the cobbler's home was uppermost. And a beautiful home it was in reality. There in the one common room, the rear of which was his workshop, sat honest Mr. Lenz the shoemaker thin and exhausted, with all his tools around him, cobbling away for a living; there, too, in the same room his wife, the nicknamed "devotee" whose wan and withered face was lighted with kindly, intelligent eyes, and whose callous, sinewy arms and hands bespoke the hard work her station in life entailed; the children were there also, seven of them—the others had gone into service—looked after and provided for as far as this was possible.

They were all doing something altho the normal working-day was long over. Two were busy hearing each other's Catechism; one was working at his school problems; the mother and the oldest daughter were cleansing the lentils of pods and faulty seeds by the light of an oil-lamp; the

tired father was listening to the news from the County Paper which his son, the oldest one at school, was reading for him; and the seventeen-year old, ill-shapen Brosi, with the hunchback and prominent shoulder-blades, was doing the nicest work of all; he was renovating and getting the crib ready for Christmas. This took so much time and patience he assured Jack and Beatrice, that he could not spare a single hour from now on until almost Christmas Eve.

The mountains of Judea must be made higher and a bridge built over the valley. Jerusalem was in need of a new temple with a dome; the roof of the stable of the holy manger must have a window with panes of red glass inserted and a place behind for a tiny light; but arranged just so that the crimson flame will fall upon the Holy Infant—this part of the work was to be exceptionally fine.

He also intended making more sheep and shepherds. The appearance of the angel was to be improved by backing him against a golden oval field from which yellow and silver rays would disperse in all directions; naturally all this was to be done without spending a penny. But wide-awake Brosi had looked ahead. A large box at his side contained a collection of requisites of all kinds: gold and varicolored paper, parts of tobacco-boxes, tinfoil, candle-stumps, statuettes, colored glass and a hundred sorts of odds and ends. A person could have spent a day with interest searching thru this heap of miscellanies.

The younger children looked upon Brosi their broad-shouldered brother, with a kind of respect because his work as Crib-Maker, but especially his office as Bellows-Blower in the church, were in a way semi-clerical appointments. He had been pumping the organ now nearly two years. This, however, suited him well, for it did not hinder him helping his father at the bench on the smaller jobs. Thereby he also earned a little money on the side and was permitted to make himself useful around the sacristy. To work for the church was his delight and so it happened as a matter of course, that the crib and the stable and its appurtenances were given over to his charge. It was a pleasure to watch him renovating or adding to the crib; the steward's children especially were fascinated by what he showed and told them. While old and young of the Lenz family were thus busily engaged, one of the children began to hum a song, another joined in and by and by the whole room in full accord was singing that wonderful Advent hymn which unites so expressively the sentiments of longing and joy:

“Arise, my soul, the praises sing
Of Him, the Maker of all things;
Whose love and power, on angel’s wing,
The message of a Savior brings.
Rejoice! A whole world’s ransoming
From out the Advent message rings.”

Sweetly and tunefully the hymn was carried from verse to verse, from the first to the last stanza.

The hearts of the singers and of the listening mansion children were filled with holy joy.

At the stroke of nine o'clock the mother said: "Children, it is time for Night Prayer." Then did little Jack and Beatrice behold with big eyes what they had never seen in their own home: the wohle family on its knees praying piously in unison. How beautiful and holy it seemed to these two poor rich orphans. It so appealed to them, that as far as they knew how, they joined in loud and courageously, especially at the Our Father with which they were more or less familiar. The mother then said a prayer from the book slowly and devoutly and this again was followed by simpler ones in common.

The young visitors stayed to the end. In their souls the first notes of the Magnificat of Advent were awakened and with regret they left the cobbler's house. Nor did it escape them to notice Waldo's mammy and her happy young ones warmly bedded under the kitchen stove. When reverting then to their own puppy shivering and whining in the woodshed of the castle, they in sympathy with him and like the little dog felt homesick for the shoemaker's hearth. These scenes in all probability made up the dream-fantasy of sister and brother that night.

And yet this rehearsal, while asleep, of what they had seen the day before, was not the effect wholly of the imagination but a result also, we may venture to say, of that powerful and bountiful grace that comes with Advent. This grace

had touched the hearts of the innocent girl and boy and moved them to long for "that something as yet indefinable," which alone is eternally true and good and satisfying. Because the cobbler's poor and overcrowded room seemed to them en-haloed and permeated with this "something indefinable," they thought it a little paradise. And God no doubt judged it so likewise..

* * *

Brosi came home angered at the treatment he had received from Miss Trude, and he showed it. With much effort the mother gradually succeeded pacifying him. "You see," she said, "the dog belongs to the villa and not any longer to us, it's no wonder, then, she is vexed at his running away so often."

"If they would treat Waldo better," he replied, "he would stay."

"The next time the dog escapes," the mother decided, "we'll not keep him even an hour; one of the boys will have to bring him back immediately; and now, Brosi, be sensible and forget about the lady in the mansion; work at your crib and remember that it is Advent and, moreover, that you hold an office in the church.

* * *

The steward had started on his journey with the Jewel Casket of the countess; Jacob his servant accompanied him. He had strictly enjoined upon his children and the women not to say a word to anyone about his absence. The same

thing he told the gardener who lived close by. He had placed his loaded weapons at the disposal of his sister-in-law to be used only in case of extreme emergency. She had learnt the handling of a gun, shooting crows and squirrels.

Three days had passed; it was assumed the steward was on his way home. The family at the villa was still up tho it was long after supper, for he was expected at any hour. However, allowing for delays on the road and the two hours' travel from the station to Eberstein, he might not arrive before midnight. The children had begged so earnestly to be permitted to welcome their papa that their bedtime hour was postponed from hour to hour. In the meantime the long rambling house was becoming uncomfortably quiet. Excepting for an occasional gust of air which disturbed the treetops in the park and rattled the windows, the place had become still.

“Listen!” the grandmother exclaimed. Not a word was spoken, no one moved.

“Yonder—I thought I heard a noise,” she said.

“Where yonder?”

“In the Treasury-Room,” she whispered.

“Pshaw, mother, that’s imagination; the silence is getting on your nerves; in an hour Alfred will be here, and you’ll be all right.”

“Yes, if he’ll only come. And if the days at this season were not so short!—Listen—the noise again!”

"Mother, it's certainly nothing! And, moreover—the dog,—don't you think he would bark, if somebody were around?"

"Good Waldo," little Jack remarked, happy and reassured, "yes, Waldo will listen, he is a fine watchdog."

"If he is not sleeping," Trude observed. Jack opening the door leading into the long hallway called out loud: "Waldo, come!" There was no response.

"Go and look into the woodshed," the grandmother commanded;—she would not own to it that she was afraid to go herself. The children followed the corridor to where a glass door barred the way. Adjoining this door was the kitchen and woodshed. Waldo was in neither place.

"I'll shoot the beast the first time I see it!" aunt Trude threatened in her rage. "No doubt the dog is at the shoemaker's again!"

So he was; but the Miss did not know that one of the Lenz's was even then on his way bringing back the terrier. As soon as the dog had shown up at the cobbler's and whiningly begged for admission, Brosi was ordered to take him up and return him at once. The youth having first assured himself that there was still light at the villa, started thither with the unwilling dog. Arrived, he rang the bell at the main door.

"It's Waldo!" Beatrice and Jack shouted. "Brosi has brought him back!" They ran down the hallway and opened the glass door from which steps descended to the main entrance. But

when old Betty went down to open the principal door in order to let the dog in, she noticed that the key would not turn. She saw the reason at once and in consternation exclaimed: "The door is not locked at all—who may have opened it? I am certain I locked it!"

"In the meantime Brosi had stepped inside with the dog. Trude, on the upper landing, her eyes sparkling with malice, was in readiness with her switch. Pulling and dragging along the terrier who was anxiously and tremulously eying the woman above, Brosi, step by step got him slowly up the broad stairs of the vestibule to the glass partition-door from where the corridor ran directly past the living-room in the fore part of the building, on to the office and Safe Room in the rear. The children had made the few steps in a jiffy and were in advance. The terrier had hardly gained the upper landing when suddenly he tore loose and rushed thru the glass-door which was left partly open, down the dark hall to the end, barking furiously as if he scented prey. At first Brosi thought the dog had merely torn away from fright, therefore he pursued him.

"For the Lord's sake!" Betty screamed, "the door to the Treasury is open also! Thieves, thieves!"

In the Treasury or Safe-Room, a terrible uproar began at once: The mad baying of the dog, the stamping of feet and angry words were heard, the stamping of feet, wild cursing, and Brosi shouting: "Thieves, robbers, help!" Then a tustling

and heaving and desperate wrestling, and a second cry: "Help me—I have him down, help...."

"Aunty, grandma, help him!" the children shrieked, looking to find them.

But Miss Trude was gone. At the first sign of danger she fled thru the glass-door, bolted it and then into the sitting-room which she also locked and barred from the inside and barricaded with tables and chairs. Pale as death and insane with fright she was crying and shouting aloud hysterically. Actuated by her blind, selfish fear she not only left Brosi to his fate fighting the robber but also kept the children shut out in the vestibule. Piteously they screamed to be let in, but to no purpose. The two women were bereft of their senses; they heard and saw nothing; they were concerned only about themselves.

With labored breath a fellow was hurrying thru the corridor, madly pursued by the little barking, snapping terrier; the man stepped into the vestibule—the children frightened to death at the stranger with a blackened face, yelled at the top of their voices; hesitating a moment he drew a knife; upon second thought he skipped down the steps and ran out the main door with brave little Waldo at his heels.

All was silent in the dark hall now, excepting for an occasional groan coming from the Safe-Room.

Little Beatrice was the first to pick up courage.

"Brosi, Brosi, are you there?" she called down the corridor.

There was a deep moan in response, then a feeble reply: "He—has stabbed me! O Jesus—mercy!"

"Dearest aunt Trude, grandmother, please open; come, Brosi is dying!" Jack and Beatrice screamed outdoing each other trying to procure help.

"What is the matter with you?" a voice at the main door called suddenly.

"Papa, papa!" the children cried as if their hearts would break; instantly they embraced and clung to him and would not let him go.

It was indeed their papa, the Steward Bronnhart, who that minute had come up from the station. He was just in time to catch a glimpse of the absconding robber and pursuing dog. Expecting the worst, he, Jacob and the coachman, with revolvers drawn entered the house. Delayed for a moment by what the children had to tell of the episode, they searched around but found no one excepting Brosi. He was lying on the floor of the Treasury in front of the drilled safe, bleeding from what seemed a mortal wound. Quickly the men took hold of him and carried him out, till they were halted by the glass-door which was still locked. After fruitlessly commanding the women in a loud and exasperated tone to open the door, the steward commanded Jacob to burst it in. The glass went shattering in all directions. The key on the inside be-

ing now within reach, the door was opened. Brosi was brought to the steward's own room and put to bed; this was the first thing necessary. Then with an improvised tourniquet the blood for the meantime was stanched.

"Are you suffering, Brosi?" he was asked. "The doctor has already been sent for and will soon arrive." The injured youth simply shook his head and whispered: "My mother..."

"Yes, good Brosi, your mother will be here directly; she will remain with you."

"We'll run and get her," the children said.

"But hurry, Betty will go with you!"

In a little while the mother and the doctor were at the wounded boy's side. The dagger-gash was examined, cleansed and properly bound up. His condition was pronounced serious. Brosi related briefly what had happened. Following the scent and barking of the terrier, he found two men in the Safe-Room. He grappled with one of the robbers and had him at his mercy but the desperate fellow managed to draw a knife and stab him.—The poor mother asked the doctor whether it were necessary to call for the priest. "It's not as bad as that," the physician replied; "for the present he is not in danger; it may take many weeks, however, before he is all right again."

"Mother,—I—am sorry—to give you all—this trouble," the son whispered, "and that I can't work—and help you!"

"Never mind, Brosi," the steward consoled him, "your parents will not be losers; you have done the count a great service."

"It was Waldo," the boy smiled.

"Yes, Waldo—he discovered the housebreakers; he'll be snugly housed after this."

While Brosi was being attended to, the steward's mother and sister-in-law entered the room. Bronnhart ignored them. "I must take a look into my office," he said. Accompanied by Jacob and the coachman who were fully armed, he examined the place. The one unbarred window was open; it was thru this the second desperado had escaped. The safe was intact excepting for a hole which the fellows had drilled above the lock. They hadn't time to finish the job. But the desk had been forced and the loose change stolen; the drawers were pulled out and their contents scattered on the floor.

When Bronnhart returned to his bedroom he found Brosi apparently in a slumber. At the bedside sat the good Mrs. Lenz saying her Rosary.

"Brosi, you are well cared for," he said wishing mother and son good-night. After this he went to the sitting-room, where the two women overwhelmed him with the story of their cowardly fright. He listened patiently to what they had to say while sipping a glass of wine to refresh himself after his trip. At last he answered: "I know it all now. But one thing and that the most important you have not explained: How could you,

the grandmother, and you the aunt of the children, lock them out of their own home, and unprotected in the vestibule, leave them to the mercy of robbers and murderers? That is the question. If that desperate man who escaped by the main door had not been less heartless than you, maybe my Beatrice and little Jack would even now lie weltering in their blood like Brosi."

The women were crushed with the rebuke and clamorously protested they did not see it that way; that from sheer terror they knew not what they were doing.

With a contemptuous wave of the hand he replied with emphasis: "That despised devotee, the wife of the cobbler, would not so have exposed her children. She would have placed herself in front of them and given up her life in their defence. And Brosi, the poor bellows-blower, whom you nicknamed a cripple and a scamp, stood up and fought bravely for me and mine; you left him to his fate. Our domestic relationship is forever at an end. Good-night!"

The week following, Miss Trude and her mother bid farewell to the villa for all times. Their place was filled by a good Catholic governess. As a consequence, not only were the children henceforth permitted to assist at the Rorate, but night and morning and before and after meals there was prayer in common in the family, and, strange to say, the steward assisted at it without reluctance, nay with the greatest pleasure. A different spirit in consequence, prevailed in the house. The

same, in fact, which had made the poor crowded house of the cobbler an asylum of peace and happiness; namely, the spirit of daily fervent prayer, of faith, lively and active. This spirit works wonders of grace in the individual and in the Christian family. It solves the most perplexing questions, such even as are too difficult and abstruse for politicians, lawmakers, writers and thinkers. "My peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you," saith the Lord.

This is the Peace of God which Christmas brings and which Advent holds in promise. The treasurer saw this exemplified in real life as he listened to what the simple, godfearing woman, the mother of Brosi, told him of her life and its vicissitudes. Then did he get to understand as he had never understood before, the mystery and the blessing of the peace of God in a Christian family.

The robbers were caught the same night. The terrier Waldo relentlessly pursued the one who had wounded Brosi; the fellow to escape detection hid in the hot-house. Attracted by the ceaseless barking of the dog the old gardener with the coachman went thither to investigate. When lo, and behold! they found the criminal crouching beneath a bench; he was none other than the young assistant whom the gardener had hired some months before; he and his accomplice had chosen this night for the robbery, when, as they knew, not only the steward but Jacob also and the coachman would be absent from the castle.

Waldo sleeps in the kitchen now, where it is warm even in winter, not in the woodshed any more. Moreover, he has the freedom of the house and can come and go as he pleases. He wears a little silver collar around his neck, a gift from the young countess, upon which is inscribed the day and date when he so heroically attested his loyalty to his old, and earned the gratitude of his new master.

Of Brosi, suffice it to say, that he got well again and that he lived and died a good, honest, respected man.

The Messenger of the Blessed Virgin

There was a subdued light in the sickroom. The lamp was dimmed with a green protector to prevent the glaring rays from offending the eyes of the bedridden sufferer whose condition, if judged by the number of vials and medicine-bottles standing around, was hopeless. The floor was heavily carpeted to deaden the footsteps of nurse and doctor, and all the arrangements for the relief of the sick one were such as only the well-to-do can afford.

The patient was the young wife of the mayor. She had been ailing for several years. Consumption, dread and merciless, was playing with her like a cat with a mouse, granting her occasionally temporary release from its grasp only to seize

her more cruelly and firmly after each respite. In this tantalizing game between life and death her health had been gradually wasted and after hardly six years of married life she was now facing the end. It was not her health, however, it was the welfare of her son, an only child, which at this moment was giving her terrible concern.

The town of which her husband was mayor was well known, not because of its wealth and advantages but simply on account of a celebrated shrine of Our Blessed Lady situated on a high plateau in the vicinity which for four hundred years had been attended and guarded by the cultured sons of St. Benedict.

Sitting at the bedside of his dying wife the mayor was listening to her earnest appeals in behalf of their only child, an infant two years old, that was peacefully slumbering in a cradle near-by.

With a most loving and pitying look at the crib, she said to her husband in a hoarse whisper interrupted with coughs: "He would be in the best of hands there; everyone speaks well of Innsbruck; boys from the finest families attend it; the place is healthful—the education excellent—"

"But the college is in charge of the Jesuits," the mayor replied, "and you know not everybody toots their horn, nor do I. Moreover,—"

"Well then, send him to some other school," she suggested,—"Raigern College—or—to Schotten-Abbey of the Benedictines in Vienna—if you prefer—"

"The last named would suit me somewhat better; but, dear Mathilda, you are exciting yourself; remember what the doctor told you—"

"That's of no consequence now—" she coughed violently. "That's of no consequence—I have—but little time left—it is my duty—My child—my poor Rudi!—It is a question of his education—when I am no more—of—a good education, do you hear?—a good, pious bringing up—It concerns the whole life of my son—his future—his immor—"

A second severe coughing spell interrupted her.

"Mathilda, I beg you, spare yourself—at least to-day."

A dissenting movement of her thin, almost transparent hand and a stern look from her dark eyes was the response. "I am responsible—for my child—before God,"—she continued, "I must provide for its soul, its salvation—and you must help me. Rudolph, promise me!"

Folding her hands she besought him weeping: "Have pity—not on me—but on our innocent boy, his soul; give him a good education. Pledge me!"

"I promise you, Mathilda, he will be well brought up," the husband assured her; "it is my child as well as yours; now then—"

He was suddenly stopped. A paroxysm of gasps and coughs threw the wife into a dead faint. The nurse rushed into the room and with much effort slowly brought her to.

All this while little Rudi was sleeping quietly.

The mother knew very well what she was up to in pressing her husband for a solemn promise that

he provide a Christian education for the one child of their shortlived union. He was a luke-warm Catholic as were most of his fellows in office during those unhappy years when Austria was cursed with Josephinism.

Altho baptized a Catholic and called a Catholic, his practical Religion consisted on the one hand in placing the innovations of the Sectarians upon an equal footing with the truths of the Church, on the other, in denying the principles and practices of his faith by a studied silence and criminal indifference.

This was called "broadmindedness." The man permitted himself to be prejudiced against the Religious Schools by his "liberal" friends and godless papers. The wife, then, had reason to fear for him but still more for her son.

Therefore she seized upon her last chance to heal his prejudiced mind and if possible bind him even by a solemn oath to send their son Rudi to a Catholic institution especially during his formative years. His promise and pledge, however, lacked the ring of sincerity, which did not escape the wife. She knew that his words, after all, were evasive and spoken merely for the purpose of calming her for the moment. They had the contrary effect. The poor mother unfortunately had good reason to fear her darling child some day perhaps would live estranged from his faith, an alien to his holy Church. Of what use then would all secular knowledge and earthly happiness be to him for eternity?

It was at the break of day in Mid-Advent. You could see from the lights in the houses that the people were getting ready for the pilgrimage up the mountain to Our Lady of Comfort, to attend the solemn *Rorate Exercises*. The Benedictine Fathers, who esteemed this morning devotion as the best preparation for Christmas, led on and encouraged the people: prayed and sang with and preached to them and offered up the Holy Mass for them.

The mayor's wife had passed the night in complete exhaustion. Toward the morning after a fitful slumber she opened her eyes.

"Margaret!" she spoke loudly. The call coming so unexpectedly from the dying woman and at a time when all in the room was somber and still, sounded strange, almost startling.

"Margaret!"

Quickly the nurse got up from the rocker where she had snatched a little sleep and went to the bedside: "Lady Mayoress! What is it?"

"Bring Rudi to me!"

"Rudi? The boy is sleeping so soundly, you will wake him up," the maid objected.

"Bring him to me; he'll not wake—and if he does—I have but a short time."

Reluctantly the nurse approached the cradle.

"No,—wait—first fix me up a little."

Slowly and carefully the servant raised the woman to a half-sitting posture and supported her with pillows.

"Now the child!"

Without awakening it, Margaret brought the child and placed it in the lap of the dying mother. Raising her waxen hands over her little one she began to pray while her tears were flowing hot and fast. From a mere whisper, her ardent prayer became audible, loud: "To thee, Holy Mother of God, Our Lady of Comfort, I entrust my child, my poor Rudi; look down upon and hear me. All my life I have loved and served thee and as far as I know, have been faithful to thee. Hear, then, my prayers and regard my cares. Once I am dead, this child will have no one to look after its immortal soul; it will be more orphaned than the poorest orphan. Because thou hast a mother's heart thou dost understand my anxiety and my fears; thy heart will forsake neither me nor my child; upon this belief I ground my hope. Extend over Rudi thy protecting arm, place him under thy patronage, then will he be secured for time and eternity. Thou knowest, O most loving Mother, the value of a soul. For the sake of thy Son, as a grace of the Advent Season, as a holy Christmas gift, hear me, a mother in the last hour of her life, imploring a mother, and receive into thy arms my child... Oh! let him not be lost the son that I have born; bring him back to the right way should he go astray, back to Jesus, the Fruit of thy womb, that he may find grace... It is the very last thing I can do for my child, sweetest Mother... I can do no more... my strength is gone... Life and death and its agony... I offer up for him—if necessary—suf-

ferings—to the end of the world—in purgatory just so that my child will be saved—”

The mother sank back into the pillow gasping for breath. With a final effort she raised herself up and bent over her child.

“Holy Water, Holy Water!” she exclaimed.

Margaret took the stoup from the wall and handed it to her. The sick woman, her face the color of death, dipped her finger into the vessel and making the Sign of the Cross on the infant said: “Rudi—your mother blesses you—a thousand times—in the Name of the Father—of the Son—and of the Holy Ghost.”

Then with trembling arms pressing the sleeping child to her bosom she kissed it. A moment after her hold relaxed, the infant slipped back upon the bedding and the mother with a slight turn to the right yielded up her soul. She had been prepared for death a long time before thru the Holy Sacraments which the Church reserves for the dying. Before the attendant was aware of it, the young wife of the mayor had passed to eternity. The sweet sound of many bells rang out the Amen to this last scene in her life and announced in throbbing chords to the breaking morn her heavenward flight. They were the bells of the church of Our Lady of Comfort gladdening the valley and the peaks around and proclaiming in the name of the Holy Mother herself,—so the people said and believed,—pardon, peace and comfort to all her children far and near. That is why they sounded so sweetly,

so devotionally, so soothingly, and called and invited in tones none could withstand.

The Rorate devotions had begun in Our Lady's mountain shrine. Thru the gray twilight of that Advent morning the two mighty towers of the church of pilgrimage on the mountain top, looked down upon the houses of the city below and particularly upon the handsome residence within which the young wife Mathilda lay dead. Margaret, agitated and shocked, lit the blessed candle and placed it beside the bed. Then by its reflection was there seen in the dusk room upon the brow of the still slumbering child a spot that shone like a jewel. It was the last tear of its mother.

* * *

It was in the year 1848, at harvest time. There were revolutions over the whole of Europe, therefore as a matter of course, in Austria also. Vienna was one of the centers. Adventurers of all kinds had gathered there; men who were opposed to all authority good or bad, mortal enemies of the Church and the State. The vanguard of this army of agitators were Jewish radicals, who were followed by crowds of men without principle, without conviction, by men who had nothing at stake and therefore nothing to lose. Mobs also of callow students were in evidence everywhere, and anarchists, and mad socialists; demagogues with loudmouthed speeches about liberty and especially hundreds of fellows whose sole doctrine was bitter hate, who hated everything but especially

Religion and Faith, the Church and the Priest-hood. Of such material was this revolutionary rabble composed. To help on the agitation, notorious leaders from Germany were invited to Vienna, who were adepts in misleading the people with glib and poetic sophisms.

Among these coiners of phrases, Ronge, the archapostate and founder of "German Catholicism," was the greatest; next to him stood the once popular but now forgotten demagogue Schutte, and Frobel the Swiss Professor who was noted for preaching a neutral Christianity. The nebulous declamations of these teachers affected the students like new wine; "Universal Liberty!" was their war-cry, to achieve which they organized a "legion" of their own.

The vast number of willing and unwilling unemployed, whom the State at its own expense put to work whenever possible, were only too ready upon the least provocation to engage in riotous demonstrations; under the leadership of the so-called patriots, the whole city in a short time became panic-stricken. The Government lacked a prudent, energetic head. The young emperor only eighteen years of age at the time, was wanting in experience. To make matters worse, the rumor spread that the rebel Kossuth was marching with a large army of Hungarians against the Capital to support the revolution. Confusion was the order of the day and no one knew what might happen from week to week.

Little by little this spirit of restlessness appeared in the rural districts also. Agents were hired for the express purpose of spreading the gospel of anarchy in the hamlets and on the fields. The Abbey of Our Lady of Comfort and the town at the foot of this place of pilgrimage heard with consternation the rumblings of the coming storm.

Across from the abbey-portal was the inn "To the Crown," the grandest and most stately building within the shadow of the mighty church of Our Lady. To spite the cloister, the bitter enemies of the Altar and the Throne had chosen it as their headquarters. The innkeeper was doing an immense business in consequence. His competitors, on the other hand, were without patronage of any kind because the pilgrimages had entirely ceased. The mayor was responsible for this. As a liberal, he favored the enemies of the abbey and refused to protect the pious visitors to Our Lady's shrine against the jeers and insults of the mob.

Proudly from the pinnacle of the Crown Inn waved a black-red-golden flag. Its purpose was to announce a great popular meeting for that night, for which occasion renowned speakers, "friends of the people," had been engaged, whose task and pleasure it would be "to enlighten" the men in the woods up yonder about the needs and the demands of the time.

The largest assembly room in the building was got ready. The picture of the kindhearted Pius IX and that of the young emperor Francis Joseph

who had recently ascended the throne, had been removed; in their places were put the picture of the Hungarian rebel Kossuth and that of the apostate priest Ronge.

The hall, however, remained half empty while the two large barrooms below were thronged with guests. Downstairs not a vacant seat could be had. The taverner, his wife and assistant, had all they could do uncorking bottles, tapping kegs and filling glasses with beer and wine. Nothing was served at the tables but game; woodcutters, laborers, hired hands, had all they could eat like the richest in the land. The taprooms rang with boisterous laughter.

"For once we have a meal for nothing that would grace the table of any gentleman: stewed and roasted rabbit and deer," they remarked.

The innkeeper and his wife encouraged the guests to eat and drink as much as they liked. "I hope it's to your taste, my men! Game is cheap, the abbey pays for it!"

This smart saying was greeted with roaring applause. "Give me another helping!"—"Another piece, please!" "Put a little more on my plate!" Such were the orders given back and forth and all the while the crowd talked and screamed and shouted and jostled each other, not a word could be understood.

The Vienna patriots and the other friends of liberty had permitted the "free people" to hunt the abbey forest for game. The report of guns that day was heard in all directions; in the woods,

in the brush, in the open. Any old fowling-piece was all right to shoot with. Jewish dealers in game, apprised of what was to happen, were on hand and filled their wagons with the booty of the chase at a price that was ridiculously low. Even so there was still enough for the peasants; the groaning tables that night at The Crown proved it.

In the meantime propagandists of evil were assiduously spreading among the guests all kinds of vile leaflets and pamphlets, illustrated sheets and magazines. One of the papers was called "The Constitution," another, "Charivari," a third "The Barber of Croakertown," a fourth and fifth, "The Vienna Scoundrel," "The Vienna Brawler," and one of them was named "Satan." Tis last sheet both in title and contents was a little too strong even for these blinded dupes; none of them wanted a copy of it.

By and by the carousers left the lower rooms for the upper hall. In this hall a little table and chair were placed in front upon an improvised stage; these were reserved for the Chairman of the meeting. The other seats on the platform had already been taken by gentlemen whom nobody knew. These strangers were mostly of massive build, with long, unshorn hair and unkempt beards; by way of collar and cravat they wore a fringed scarf around their necks and their coats were of a strikingly coarse texture. Upon the stage they sat, these patriots, terrifically in earnest, grim as death, facing the people. Occasionally, with studied gravity, they interchang-

ed a word, sagely inspected the fly-leaves on the table, or mustered the audience. Finally one of the leaders got up and announced:

“Let the flood of oratory now be loosed!”

Up in the balcony in the rear of the hall, a young, healthy man had taken a seat in the musicians' box. On account of the crowd no one took any notice of him there.

It was Rudi, the mayor's son. His father was quite an old man; he, the two-year old child, that had been so prematurely robbed by death of a Christian mother, was beginning his twenty-first year. According to the custom of the time he wore his hair long; around the ample flaps of a wide-opened vest a long red tie dangled to his bosom. Listening to the pompous speech of the first “orator” whose monotonous trumpeting was splitting the ears of the peasants, the pale and intelligent face of Rudi displayed in turn mockery and amusement, but oftenest a profound, inexpressible contempt.

The young man had made his studies neither at Shotten Abbey in Vienna nor at Raigern Institute, nor at any professedly Christian college. The husband regarded the dying wish of his wife only insofar as to permit the son to enter a school where Religion was placed not higher but only upon par with other studies and where if the boys prayed and went to the Sacraments at all, it was as a matter of routine, subject to schedule and regulation like any ordinary class-exercise. In this school, the teacher and the pupils were nomin-

ally Catholics but nothing more. The soul was wanting. As an inevitable result no one approached the Sacraments excepting as an irksome duty.

How his poor soul hungering after grace stood it during all these years, Rudi was never able to tell. But this he knew, that all this while he felt ill at ease, that his faith was faltering, that his soul was the victim of doubt, of scruples of conscience, of dejection of spirit and of religious indifference. There was no one, his father least of all, to whom he might trustfully apply for guidance.

This interior conflict, this distress of soul, was aggravated at the University. At one time Rudi had made up his mind to take up the study of Theology; in spite of his scruples and doubts he felt an inclination that way. The ridicule of the students, however, the scoffs of godless professors, and especially the violent opposition of his father, stopped him from going on.

Then for a year he took up Law only to become disgusted with it in turn.

In the meantime the revolutionary flood had undermined Colleges and Universities and had involved him with thousands of other students in ruin. He had joined the Revolutionists and participated in their riotous excesses so that as a result, in order to escape prosecution, he was forced to flee from Vienna. He came home therefore and stayed with his father but not to the latter's delight who began to fear that his only son

might graduate into life without any profession at all.

Curiosity and ennui had brought Rudi to attend the great meeting at "The Crown." His enthusiasm for the cause of "liberty" was dampened at the very start; he had looked behind the scenes. This popular assembly seemed to him so like a comedy it filled him with disgust and contempt for all mankind in general.

Such was Rudi at the present time—the child which the saintly mother upon her deathbed had so trustfully confided to the Blessed Virgin.

Was her trust ungrounded? Was her prayer to remain unanswered? Was the last blessing of the mother to be without avail?

A well-known Vienna Israelite in an artful speech which was nothing more than a tissue of criminal misstatements and calumnies, asserted from the platform that the miseries and burdens of the people and especially of the poor were due to the nobility, to the Priesthood and most of all to the convents. In dead silence, the simple people listened to the plausible charges of the designing Jew and accepted them as true. When, therefore, the next speaker, a long-haired, full-bearded giant got up, and in a tragic pose with artificial pathos, relieved himself in a thundering voice of a frothy declamation, that was full of interminable sentences bristling with foreign words and quotations from the poets, the enthusiasm of the towns-people and of the peasantry knew no bounds.

They applauded every sentence. "That man's got a first-rate windpipe!" "He's got the gift of gab!" "He's not afraid to speak out!" "Good luck to you, longlegs!" "Success, brother!" "That's grand and he's right; he deserves credit!" "Ah! he's our man!" "The echo of that speech will be heard in the Imperial City!" "Three cheers!" with such exclamations and others like them, the unthinking crowd punctuated the harangue of the deceiver.

Rudi's eyes sparkled at the farcical exhibition and a grin of amusement enlivened his face. It was hard for him to decide whether to laugh at or despise these "patriots" on the stage and these "idiots" on the floor. The former did all the deceiving, the lying, the inciting; the latter, dazzled and stupefied, allowed themselves to be led hither and thither by the nose.

"I wonder how this comedy will end?" Rudi asked himself.

There was a commotion in the hall. Just as the last great "People's Advocate" had finished, a puny, pale-faced man accompanied by two abbey-servants came into the room. He was Warden of the abbey estate and a secular.

"In the name of the Rt. Rev. Abbot and of the Abbey of Our Lady of Comfort, within whose jurisdiction you stand and upon whose domain you are encroaching, I protest against this inflammatory, seditious agitation against the State and the Church, and against this violation of peace on ecclesiastical premises. I now command

this assembly to leave the hall and to disperse—the meeting is dissolved!"

In sheer astonishment at his temerity, the crowd permitted the man who was trembling with fear, to finish.

Then, as if at the instigation of hell, a terrible storm of taunts and jeers and insults broke over him.

"Get out, you clerical slave! Pitch him down the stairs, crack his skull—throw him out of the window!" the men screamed. . . .

With uplifted arms and clenched fists they exclaimed: "We are free men; the abbot has nothing to say to us! Tell him that, you sneaking cur!" The Warden, however, had escaped before they could reach him with their knuckles.

"Disturbers of the peace, did he say?" some one asked aloud. "We are asked to quiet down so that the gentleman across the street may sleep," a neighbor replied.

"Give them peace then with a vengeance!"—The hall became a veritable pandemonium. The freemen bawled, shouted, cheered, stamped and jumped till the windows rattled and the floors shook. They whistled and hooted and passed bitter retorts back and forth at the top of their voices, to add to the uproar. "Let's visit the abbey!" one of the fellows suggested. "Force the gates, sound the alarm, ring in the advent of liberty with the bells of the monks!" At that moment the blare of trumpets was heard.

"Music, music! The Bohemain band is coming! Enjoy yourselves, boys!" the taverner encouraged.

"Let them in, let them in! Blow away, Bohemians, blow away and fiddle and toot, till the very roof of yonder building comes down!"

The musicians came in and at once struck the fortissimo. Now was the wild storm at its height.

"It is a madhouse, a hell!" Rudi whispered. "And yet these are the people, the free people—a herd of wild steers rather, lashed into fury by a couple of imported drivers. What chance is there to help such a mob!"

Suddenly a pause ensued.

"Hist, hist!" was ejaculated in every part of the room. All eyes were directed toward the stage where the speakers were still assembled.

What was going on there?

Rudi, like everybody else, looked to see.

A frail girl, about nine years of age, poorly dressed and barefooted, her hair in a meager braid, was standing in front of the Chairman's table. No one knew how or when the girl got into the room.

"I wonder what the child wants up there?" a man in the audience asked loud enough to be heard by all. Instantly the noise was hushed, for the people were eager to hear the answer to the last question. There was no answer but instead the child turned round and facing the assembly with folded hands, it pleaded with its tiny silvery voice,

tremulous from suppressed weeping, so as to be heard by all: "I kindly beg you, gentlemen, not to be quite so loud; my mother is dying!"

"Whose child is it?" some one inquired. Several answered: "Andrew, the woodcutter's, who lives next door."

It had become still as death.

"That's a better reason than the Warden's," a man remarked; "let us go home, then."

No one opposed the suggestion; quickly the rough woodsmen and farmers, the servants and laborers, the musicians also cleared the hall.

But he who looked upon the meeting as a wild, wicked, contemptible comedy became quite serious when he witnessed the last scene.

The inn was deserted. Close by in the room of a small one-story house the priest and many who had just come from the hall were assisting with their prayers the poor woman in the agony of death.

Rudi remained seated in the balcony a long while after all had gone, buried in thought. Finally passing his hand over his brow he got up.

"I know my way now!" he said with a loud, firm voice, and left the hall.

* * *

The great Popular Meeting at "The Crown," opposite the celebrated Abbey Church of Our Lady of Comfort, ended singularly, as we have seen. The people left the hall and scattered without adopting or agreeing upon any plans for

the future, so that the "Reds" and Radicals were obliged to return to Vienna without having accomplished anything.

Their oily, gushing phrases and frothy talk, like the turbid floods of a cloudburst, had a devastating effect of course but only for the hour and the day. The revolution which they meant to inaugurate among the townsmen and the peasantry who lived at the very gates of the abbey, ended as it had begun—in talk.

A child it was, an unassuming barefooted child who with a few touching words had put an end to their meeting.

But who was it that gave the timid girl courage to face and address this riotous, shouting, crazy body of men? Who was it sent her into the hall?

The love for her dear dying mother it was that urged her, without hesitation, without fear, to do what she did. But it was the Blessed Virgin in the first instance who inspired her to go, so that her darling mother might die in peace and the sanctuary of Our Lady of Comfort regain its wonted quiet.

So at least did Rudi the mayor's son reason, while seated back of one of the huge pillars in this church of pilgrimage.

"Until now," he soliloquized, "I have refused to believe in miracles; I have seen one to-day. The little girl was the messenger of the Mother of God—that, and that alone, explains it all!"

However, granting that she was a messenger

of the Blessed Virgin sent to withdraw her unfortunate, misguided townsmen from their seducers, was that the end of her mission? Not at all. There was another who needed a sign from heaven more than they; to him also she was sent to set him right: Rudi the student, who at the shrine of The Virgin was thinking over the past. While all was seething and athrob within the young man's soul, a new plan of life rose up before him which he embraced immediately with a firm resolve and an iron will. Never before did he feel so happy, so spiritually elated as at this moment. The hour had struck at last when the prayer of his mother and her last blessing were to bear fruit. The Mother of God was to show her power effectively as protectress of him who as an infant had been intrusted to her care.

It was late when Rudi returned home. A few days later, he left it for good. An estrangement had sprung up between the father and son. The old lukewarm gentleman was cool and dignified in what he had to say: "You are of age, I can't forbid you; do, then, what your simple, blind fanaticism suggests; it is not with my consent you act; however, I hope that before long, you'll realize that a senseless enthusiasm and not reason has lead you on. What money you have inherited from your mother, you can squander as you please, you poor benighted boy!"

Rudi answered his father briefly and respectfully. In his ears were ringing the grand, hard words of the Gospel: "He that loveth father or

mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." He left his father's house to grapple with the task before him.

Nineteen hundred was the great Jubilee year. Countless pilgrimages wended their way toward Rome in order to visit and share within its grand Basiliacs the spiritual treasures with the munificence of the Holy Father Leo XIII in the twenty-second year of his glorious Pontificate, had offered the Christian world at large. Those who could not make the journey to the Holy City, hastened to visit the designated churches and sanctuaries in their own land. Our Lady of Comfort was the church favored by thousands; not a day passed that long files of pilgrims did not enter its portals.

But the largest Jubilee Procession of all was the one on Whitsunday. At least three thousand men and women were marching thru the main streets of the town, onward and upward to the abbey-plateau, with banners flying, cannons thundering and bells a-ringing; like the booming of the surf did the loud prayer in common of the mighty throng break against the buildings and the hills around.

Among the clergy a tall and aged priest was conspicuous; in his right hand he carried a cane upon which he leaned heavily, in his left a rosary, His face was spiritualized and pale, his hair snow-white. He was bent with age. All eyes were fixed upon him; evidently he was the one who had organized and was directing the pilgrimage.

"That's old Father George!" the people watching at the windows whispered. "It's nice of the venerable man to come back once in a while to visit his home!" "He's quite renowned!"—

"He's the best preacher in the whole country,—a second Canisius."—"Alas! he's pretty well used up tho!"—"What would his father think and say if he were still alive?"—"How old is Father George about?" "He is seventy, perhaps even more." Such were some of the remarks passed back and forth by the curious as they followed the pilgrims to their goal.

The celebrated missionary, the old, emaciated but happy Father George, was indeed a child of the town. For he was none other than Rudolph the erstwhile student, the mayor's son. Nor were the people wrong in comparing him with Canisius, the saint of the people. It is simply incredible what good Father George did for the country as a missionary and as an apostle of the people, during the fifty years he had spent in the Religious Life. He was known, respected and loved everywhere by high and low. His name was powerful and his word effective even among the nobility; the enemies of God and man feared him and none dared to gainsay or oppose him.

The immense church of Our Lady was filled from the front to the rear; for it was rumored that Father George would fill the pulpit.

"When he saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were dis-

tressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." This was the text he had chosen.

He explained that a simple, thrifty, aggressive people was just like a young man who had come of age, and was standing at the parting of ways. Two angels are there offering their services as guides; the one is grave, pious, benign, and beautiful; he will lead his client to happiness. The other, the bad angel, is treacherous, bold, importunate, frivolous and worldly; he knows only the broad way that leads to destruction. Just so do Christ the Savior and Satan the destroyer, bid for the soul, for its love and allegiance. Unfortunately, "the liar from the beginning" is only too often successful in enticing to his service a great many of the people; it is true they will find out sooner or later that he has deceived and ruined them: but generally when it is too late.

He has his seducers and preachers too. The plain, earnest voice of the Gospel is oftentimes outdone by the alluring call of the Siren. There is no tragedy in real life more appalling than that of a misguided, corrupted people, living and dying without faith. To it forsooth, the words apply: "When He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion."

The zealous priest in the pulpit spoke for fully an hour. Intently the people listened so as not to lose a word.

In conclusion he conjured them solemnly, for the sake of their happiness and peace, for the sake of their salvation, to choose the right way, to hold

to the Church, to obey the leaders God has appointed.

“Do not,” he said, “permit yourselves to be dazzled and blinded by every marsh-light that fitfully glimmers in this world.” Alluding to the Jubilarian, Leo XIII, the Head of the Church, he said that the Pope is the one safe beacon-light of the world; thru Christ and in Christ he is the great teacher of truth; the chief leader whose mission it is to show mankind the way to heaven. Then he offered up a most fervent prayer to heaven that God would grant to his people at all times reliable, faithful, courageous and pious bishops and priests who like their Divine Master could truthfully say: “I have pity on this multitude,” who in emulation of the Blessed Canisius would be ready to shed their blood for their fellowmen; who, inflamed with love and filled with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men, armed with the weapons of the spirit and of grace, would place themselves at the head leading and helping the people to the Promised Land.

“A half dozen priests like Father George would convert whole Austria,” one of the hearers remarked.

“May God grant him another dozen years!” another of the listeners prayed.

An immense secular meeting was announced for the afternoon. It was agreed at first to hold the same in the large hall of “The Crown” but the room was not half large enough; the crowd therefore moved to the open field. Father George

was obliged to attend; the people wanted to see him even if he did not speak.

As in that notorious popular assembly of five years ago so to-day the managers of the meeting had engaged several speakers from Vienna. But with what a difference! The speakers to-day were all most excellent men. They told the crowds that encircled the platform of the new and better conditions of things in Vienna. Especially were they loud in their praise of the new Christian Social mayor, the most popular man in the Capital. He it was, a dozen and a half years ago, who as a brave and consistent Catholic, backed by a single friend only, stood up in the Vienna City Council and with indomitable courage and wonderful sagacity fought the Jewish aldermen who were in the vast majority and their half-Christian allies, to a finish. Step by step he succeeded in purging the Imperial City from the excesses of the dictatorial capitalistic Israelites, and when finally after years of exhausting efforts he had opened the eyes of the Viennese and proved to them the scandalous and criminal abuse of power of the dominant party, the people rose up, threw out the venal city fathers, elected a new Council and placed him at the head as its mayor.

The imperial ministers intimidated by the money barons in whose power they stood, refused three times to ratify the election. Even after having been chosen for the fourth time by an immense majority, and after the populace had appealed directly to the emperor to confirm the election,

the latter to oblige his cowardly, enslaved ministers, waited a whole year before establishing the mayor in his office.

The people listened spell-bound to what the orators related of the first great battle of the new mayor with the moneyed powers, when he wrested from their grasp the control of the City-Lighting. The almighty Rothschild and all the great bankers of Austria refused him or the city credit and defied him to do his worst. "Sirs," he replied, "I don't need you. The sixty millions which you have refused to loan me have been sent me by other parties; I have them safely in my pocket already." The Street-Cars, the Water Works, the public Electric Plants, were forced out of the hands of the English and Austrian Jews and placed under municipal ownership at a saving of millions annually to the people.

In this way the Christian Socialists headed by the mayor got to wield an immense power and for once in the history of the city the interests of the people were being looked after. His bitterest and most relentless enemies were obliged to admit that next to the emperor himself, the Lord Mayor of Vienna was the most esteemed, most beloved, most popular man in the empire.

As a matter of course, the story of so exceptional and extraordinary a man interested the audience intensely. They confessed that he was really a man of the people, a leader, in the best sense of the word. Such a man could be trusted. He was one sent by God to rid the Capital of the

ruthless bands of robbers—aldermen and delegates—who were exploiting the public utilities for their private ends.

The townspeople long after the meeting was over, ceased not to comment on the character and achievements of this remarkable man and they agreed that such a leader they would be willing to follow anywhere.

Father George was a guest of the abbey. Later in the evening, at the earnest request of some friends who had gathered in the parlor of "The Crown" to meet him, he spent an hour in friendly converse.

The inn had changed little; it was the same old, spacious, massive building of fifty years ago. Before entering the parlor he walked upstairs to the astonishment of his companion and entered the large, empty assembly hall. For a few minutes he stood deeply reflecting; there in front was the platform, up there to the rear, the musicians' gallery. He bowed his head and said "Deo gratias!" Then he stepped out and went down to meet his friends.

He found a small but very select company in the parlor: several honorable So and Sos, and some noblemen; they had known and been friends of his father, the late mayor of the town. The landlady of the inn was sitting in the back of the room, busy with fancy needlework. Pointing to her, one of the gentlemen said: "She does us the honor to wait on us personally; on her part

she requests that we grant her the favor to spend the evening in our company."

"That's a compliment to us," another of the circle observed, "because the proprietress of The Crown ranks among innkeepers male and female, as the mayor of Vienna among the mayors of other cities and towns."

Loud laughing greeted the comparison. "She is here not exactly without reason," one of the men remarked seriously.

"Do you wish me to go?" she asked, getting up.

"Not at all; we are glad and it is our wish that you stay."

"But don't be too inquisitive," the Religious said good-naturedly.

"Surely, Your Reverence, it is always possible to learn something even at sixty years of age, from so learned a circle of gentlemen as this," she said and sat down again.

The center of interest was Father George. He was asked a thousand questions about his missionary work.

"It's a long time since you have visited your home town," a gentleman observed.

"The last time I was here was a year before my father's death. I did not think then that I woud never see him again on this earth."

"Your Reverence, there was a time when your father the mayor, would not have believed that his only son would ever be a priest."

Pausing awhile the Religious replied: "At that time I would not have believed it myself."

"Will you permit me to ask how it happened that you entered a Religious Order?"

The question was asked by an old, venerable man. Without hesitation Father George answered: "I will tell you in a few words and with especial pleasure here in this place, because it was in this inn that the great turn in my life was brought about."

"Here?—In this inn?—The Crown Inn?" a half-dozen of his friends asked at one and the same time. The aged landlady also looked at the Religious questioningly with her beautiful dark eyes, attending to her knitting the while in a languid way.

"Indeed. Listen!" he said. "After having completed my classics and one term at the Univeristy I was still undecided about my vocation. The professions I had taken up one by one disgusted me in turn. It was in 1848, during the period of "Storm and Stress," that to amuse myself I attended a meeting of "The Reds" in this very inn. I took a seat way to the back in the Orchestra-box." He looked at the landlady and nodded to her.

She nodded in return, meditatively.

"Listening to the artful, sophistical phrases of the redoubtable Vienna patriots, and witnessing the pitiable gullibility of the audience, I did not know whether to laugh or cry. The crowds were led onward from excitement to anger, from anger to fury; and when at last the Abbey Warden came to remonstrate with them, pandemonium

broke loose. The mob howled, stamped, whistled, sang ribald songs and acted as if possessed by the devil. With inexpressible disgust I saw that the hall was filled with lunatics and not with sane men, that they ought to have met not in an inn but in a madhouse. Suddenly something happened.

Father George after pausing a minute continued: "A little girl, no one knew whence she came, was all at once on the platform facing the Chairman. The noise was hushed and the people saw the child fold and raise its hands in prayer and heard it sob and beg that the men should be less noisy because its mother lay a-dying. Instantly not a sound was heard and within five minutes the hall was empty. Yea more, many of the loudmouthed dupes and game-thieves stopped at the little house and helped the sick woman with her prayers in her last struggle. This proved to me that the dupes were more sinned against than sinning."

The parlor-company was moved and dumfounded. The landlady rested her hands in her lap and large tears were trickling down her cheeks.

"That very minute I found my vocation," the Religious asserted with emphasis. "Then were my eyes opened; I got to know and to love the common people. For them, said I to myself, it is worth while to sacrifice one's life, in order to guard them against seducers of all kinds and teach them to judge safely for themselves what is and what is not conducive to their salvation.

Therefore with the help of God I consecrated my life to this work, and that I might attend to it without hindrance I became a Religious. My special work is giving Missions. I have never for a moment regretted my step and had I a thousand lives I would gladly devote them to the poor people the number of whose enemies is infinite.

"It is but right to add," the priest said toward the finish, "that my father became reconciled to my vocation in the end."

"You are smiling, Sir," the Religious said addressing the Keeper of the Royal Park; "I think I know why. My father may well have been satisfied with my profession you argue, when he found how popular his son had become. There may be some truth in that. However, when I last saw him, a year before his death, he was really in earnest. The infirmities of old age had exercised a mellowing effect upon him. It is a matter so purely personal that it hardly suits a social gathering like this, still justice to my father's name requires it and my duty as a missionary never to miss a chance of doing good urges me to tell it: 'My son,' he said to me at that last meeting, 'I am tortured thinking about what will happen to me in eternity.' I advised him once and for all to make a good General Confession, that then he would feel relieved. Promising to do so, he avowed that even if he were assured he would escape hell, the thought of the many years he must spend in purgatory to atone for his many sins would still be appalling. Then suddenly did the Sanc-

tuary of Our Lady of Comfort loom up before me. The vision suggested the plan that I ask my father, if not too burdensome to him, to join the Confraternity of Our Lady of Comfort, by saying the thirteen Our Fathers and Hail Marys and the prayers prescribed and wearing the customary girdle. I assured him that by doing so, he would share in the prayers of the Brotherhood and enjoy the special protection of the Blessed Virgin.

"Gentlemen, there was a time when my father was proud of being called a Josephist, but at the end of his life, when his terrible day of Judgment was near at hand, he wished and begged to be regarded as a client of Our Lady of Comfort. And I am convinced this good Mother did not forsake him in his agony even as she did not forsake me in my hour of trial and moreover, that she listened to the prayers which my sainted mother deceased was continually offering up for him and for me."

The company was profoundly moved and impressed. By way of conclusion the old priest remarked that in regard to an episode of that turbulent meeting in the year Forty-Eight there was one circumstance he could never explain, namely, how that little frail girl managed to push thru the crowded hall and reach the stage. It seemed a miracle to him.

"There was nothing miraculous about it," the woman answered getting up and laying her knitting aside.

"Can you explain it, landlady?"

"Most assuredly, Your Reverence," she replied. "The girl did not push thru the throng at all, but from the top of a wagon which was standing to the rear of the inn, she climbed thru a back window and up a little stairway onto the stage. That is how she happened to appear on the platform, as it were, of a sudden."

"How do you know that?" the Reverend Father inquired.

"Because I was that little girl myself, Your Reverence."

An involuntary exclamation of surprise was heard from the mouths of all.

"If you please, I can tell you the particulars," the landlady continued. "My mother in her agony was waiting for the priest to give her the Last Sacraments; greatly disturbed at the noise of the music and the shouting and stamping of feet, she gave me a look of intense sorrow. Then it was it seemed to me some one whispered into my ear, go over and beg the men to stop. I could not resist the voice and without timidity or fear I took the shortest route to reach the Chairman to beg him to rap the men to order." She was called out of the room for a minute.

"The Mother of God sent you out of love for her Son in the Holy Viaticum and out of love for your dying mother,"—this was the opinion of the good Religious, for tho he said nothing, his eyes and face betrayed his thoughts.

"Who would ever have imagined," one of the gentlemen commented, "that the poor, barefooted

child, the daughter of the woodcutter, would some day be mistress and landlady of The Crown!"

"It had to be," a neighbor observed. "The former taverner had gone the limit in annoying the abbey, the pilgrimages and the faithful; he trusted his worldly friends to help him out in consequence. But they gradually forsook him. He went bankrupt because there was no blessing on his house. Another man bought the inn and his son and heir became the husband of the present landlady. Fifteen years ago the husband died and his widow, our hostess, inherited the place. The inn is conducted decently again and enjoys the highest and most select patronage."

The widow had returned and stepped into the room. The party paid their dues and got up to leave. "Landlady," said Father George extending his hand to her, "I must thank you, better late than never. At that time when you were sent by the Mother of God to the meeting, you were sent to me also. I'll only say this much to you now: I am not surprised that you have become proprietress of the Crown Inn, since you were able even at nine years of age to pacify a mob of riotous men. If ever you are canonized you will be venerated as Patroness of Christian Hotel-keepers."

"Now, now, father, if you can tease a person that way, you yourself are a long way yet from canonization!" she wittily retorted.

On their leisurely return to the abbey that night, Father George and the companion who ac-

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accompanied him overheard the people along the way still speaking of the fine meeting that afternoon and of the admirable mayor of Vienna. The enthusiasm of the townspeople was especially typified in Flori the locksmith who lived in the last house of the town; you could hear every word of his story as he was loudly and excitedly rehearsing to his wife the great doings that afternoon at The Crown.

Translator's Note:

The "man of the people" alluded to in the second part of the foregoing story, was the fearless, incomparable Carl Lueger, burgomaster of Vienna from 1895 until his death in 1910.

At the time of his election to the City Council in 1875, the Austrian capital was being mercilessly exploited by the Jewish clique then in power; under their regime it had become the most disordered and wretched city in Europe. Political corruption was rampant, Religion was at its lowest ebb, morality almost extinct, the economic condition of the people hopeless.

Unflinchingly, indomitably, Lueger grappled with the tyrants and despoilers of the city. In association with Baron Vogelsang he organized the Christian Social Union and with its backing, step by step he practically re-created Vienna religiously, morally, economically.

Carl Lueger's name deserves to rank with that of his illustrious countryman, the apostle of Vienna, St. Clement Hofbauer.

The Broken Statue and Its Double

A STORY FROM REAL LIFE

The Joys That Once Were Mine

A lament from my days of youth,
Comes, sobbing the refrain:
"How have they flown, all, all, forsooth,
The joys that once were mine!"

Begrudge me not the meagre yield
Of happiness from memory culled:
Childhood's hearth and home and field
In dreamland still are mine.

These when I bade a curt farewell,
The earth with pleasure seemed so full;
Returning now I weeping tell,
That grief alone is mine.

No summer birds to me'll restore
The what I rue with bitter tears;
And yet the birds sing as of yore,
When village-joys were mine!

This song was the last one of the four solos which the Prima Donna, whose name was known over half of Europe, sang that night. The immense audience, assembled in the largest Auditorium of the Capital listened to her in silent rapture. In a manner artless and simple as a mother would sing to her child but at the same time with such passionate intensity as if her soul would expire in the effort, the Diva proceeded from stanza to stanza. Not a syllable was slurred nor lost, not a note but was uttered with a voice wonderfully rich and pure—the hearers were spell-bound. When the last diminishing chords played rapidly in harplike arpeggios on the Concert Grand had died away, a long pause ensued which was broken at last by the tremendous applause of the packed Opera House.

Four and five times the singer was called to appear before the curtain; the cheers and hand-clapping seemed never to end. The people begged and shouted for an encore but the artist refused to respond. She knew that she had tried and achieved her very best, beside which any effort less successful would seem like a profanation.

The Musical Director rapped for order and then gave the cue for Beethoven's majestic Third Symphony, the "Eroika." Titanically, up from the vast Orchestra, the surging waves of harmony, rose and rolled and overwhelmed the thousands with its grandeur and power.

In the middle front of the parquet a young couple was seated, the Wenntmanns by name. He sat rigidly erect, with a face drawn and tense and eyes directed to the stage as if he were afraid of losing a note. Even to the ordinary observer, however, the man's artificial pose, blending poorly with his nervousness and occasional listlessness, was proof that he knew less about the music than he pretended.

The case was different with his wife. She was not prepossessing in appearance. Her face was too angular and attenuated to be beautiful; the cares and sufferings of life perhaps, had given it that wan and pinched appearance. But at the moment an exaltation of spirit made her rather graceful and comely. While the hall was reverberating with the wonderful harmonies of the full Orchestra she had forgotten all else around her. You could see that she was profoundly affected; from beneath her half-closed eyes the glistening tear stood out; she was transported to another world.

The thunderous accords of the brass instruments, the soothing and enticing strains of the flutes and the violins in the Symphony struck upon her ear like a dull, distant, droning monotone only. Her soul was still too much enthralled by that sweet sad song:

"How have they flown, all, all, forsooth,
The joys that once were mine!"

She was looking back over the past, back to the days of her youth which long ago had fled.

The home of her childhood loomed up before her: the stately mansion with its appurtenances; the large barns and granaries; the big garden and the nut-tree of ample girth in front of the common hall; the odoriferous flowers, the thrilling songbirds, the golden sunshine and most of all the inviolable peace resting over all. She, the blithe care-free Benedicta, loved and petted by her parents, her sister and brothers, had no idea that the future would bring disillusionment and crosses, until the day her darling mother was snatched away from her by a quick malignant fever. Within the short interval of five days the best of hearts that beat in accord with hers was stilled in death.

Benedicta was thirteen years old at the time, her sister Monica, ten. From that day they did not as heretofore, go skipping and singing to school but dressed in black, they walked the long way demurely back and forth. On Sundays they always paid a visit to the grave of their mother after having sedately attended church with their father and grandfather.

Two years later there was a change. It was a beautiful morning in May. The park and the stableyards were crowded with the buggies of uncles and aunts and other relatives. The men wore a sprig of rosemary and a carnation in their coat-lapels. The horses were gay with ribbon-braided manes and the vehicles with streamers. In the large common-room the table was set with coffee-cups and wine-glasses.

The musicians seated upon a decorated hay-wagon under a cluster of trees began a festive march with cornet, clarinet and bass. Upon which the father in a rich wedding suit came out of the house and down the stone steps with the new mother, a stately woman, somewhat taller than himself, at his left. They stepped into the first buggy which was garlanded with evergreens and wreathed with flowers; the four children entered the second, the relatives followed; the bridal procession was on its way to the church for the marriage.

Now came the time of trial. The grandparents whose favorite Benedicta had been, were dead. The father no doubt, loved his children by his first wife, but from the day of birth of the two lovely stepchildren his love was divided. At the same time unfortunately, a coldness sprang up between the two sisters of the first marriage. Benedicta moreover, who had finished school before her father's second wedding, looked upon this union with disfavor and found it repugnant to make up with a new mother. She was confirmed in her antipathy by an old servant of her grandparents. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that when, in her quick and resolute manner she consciously or unconsciously encroached upon the rights of the stepmother, the latter who had noticed her growing opposition, resented it quickly and sharply.

This mutual aversion was aggravated still more by the fact that the stepmother in correcting Ben-

edicta, invariably held up to her as a model the example of her quiet, obedient, lovable sister Monica.

The father who witnessed the growing estrangement between his wife and daughter, sent Benedicta for half a year to a relative in Constance; she was there to acquire a handiwork and in the meantime subdue and outlive her unreasonable resentment. The girl being apt and diligent, learned a great deal in a short time. But one thing it would have been better she had never acquired: a taste for frivolous books. The old aunt to whose care she had been entrusted, instead of warning and directing her, allowed her to browse in literary fields of all kinds. According to her view, indiscriminate reading would broaden and make Benedicta a "cultured" lady. How many a Sunday evening did not the maiden, in a sheltered spot by the harbor of Lake Constance, sit reading a novel or a romance, until the moon and stars began to appear in the pale skies, the while identifying herself with her heroines and putting herself in their place! Like them she imagined herself a paragon of perfection misunderstood and unappreciated by all... Naturally therefore, there was little improvement in the conduct of Benedicta upon her return to her father's house; on the contrary, she was more stubborn and insolent toward her stepmother than ever. Under these conditions, the latter refused any longer to advise her stepchild and oftentimes no doubt, reproved her with undue rigor.

The inevitable break was not long in coming.

Oh, how vividly to-night the scene passed before Benedicta's mind! It was Kermess, the annual festival of the Dedication of their church; the sisters attended the festival with their father; the mother remained at home. After tasting of the cake and sipping a glass of wine the two girls tired of the father's company. "We would like to go over to the dancing-floor for a while and look on," they told him. "Do as you please," he said, "but I hope you will not take part in the dancing. Many of the men present are strangers to the parish, flirts and adventurers who will stop at nothing. What would the pastor say if you did so?" The last remark the father made rather jokingly.

Excepting at the marriage of a relative, his daughters never danced at least not in public; then too, they were members of the Young Ladies' Sodality; therefore they were safeguarded sufficiently. It was to happen otherwise, however.

The sturdy son of the mayor had just asked Benedicta for a dance.

"What are you saying, Anthony!" Monica laughingly interposed. "Don't you know we belong to the Young Ladies' Sodality?"

This assumed guardianship on the part of the younger sister over her, so nettled Benedicta, that tho in her heart she gave Monica right, she denied it with words: "Ah, pshaw! a girl after she reaches twenty-one is not bound by such regulations."

Monica in surprise, nudged her sister and said: "Surely, you don't mean that—above all think what stepmother would say!"

At the mention of the word stepmother, the spirit of rebellion arose within her, and in pure defiance she replied: "I'll do it a purpose to spite her!" She stepped out upon the floor with Anthony. One dance led to others. Monica breathed not a word at home of what had occurred; the stepmother, however, heard of it two days after.

Benedicta in the meantime had thoroughly regretted her temerity and was really sorry, but her stepmother was not aware of this. Therefore in presence of Monica and of the first maid she upbraided the girl fiercely and blindly. When Benedicta, apparently calm replied to this simply: "Mother, I am of age and know my duty!" the mother became furious. With clenched uplifted fist she screamed: "Yes, you are of age, but you are also a bad woman or at least on the way to become one!" Benedicta pale as death, could hardly stand on her feet at the terrible charge.

Controlling herself with all the power at her command she, in an icy, startling tone, replied: "I have addressed you to-day as 'mother' for the last time."

"Your father thinks of you as I do!" the stepmother called after Benedicta who was rushing to her room to ease her heart with a spell of hysterical weeping. The next morning the maiden was gone. She had fled to her aunt

in Constance where she found employment and a responsible position in one of the large tourist hotels of the place. All home-ties were henceforth severed.

It is true, immediately upon his daughter's flight, the father had telegraphed to his relative in Constance, begging her if Benedicta were there, to tell her to return home at once. To this message the daughter replied: "After my stepmother has questioned what I hold dearest in life—my honor—I can never live under the same roof with her, unless she comes here and apologizes for the wrong she has done me. Moreover, I am of age now and quite able to take care of my virtue. My regards to you, dearest father, and to Monica." This letter was never answered. Her connection with her father's home was at an end.

Five years she remained in Constance; her conscience had nothing to accuse her of during this time. There was a great deal of work to look after at the hotel during the summer when the Tourist Season was at its height; she had to meet and please people of many different dispositions both among the guests and among the hundred hotel employees; as far as possible she did her duty to all. The managers were greatly pleased with her and trusted her absolutely. She was also faithful in attending church and went to the Sacraments several times a year. The hotel-help looked up to her, for all were of the opinion that Benedicta was a girl of principle and character. She would have continued to hold her

remunerative and responsible position beyond the five years, had not the man, her present husband, crossed her path; courtship, engagement and wedding followed quickly upon one another.

How lively was the recollection of it all! What a glorious Witsunday it was, when her father and mother-in-law to be, welcomed her as their future daughter! At first she somewhat doubted the statements of her betrothed in regard to the standing and the fortune of his parents; still what difference would it make to her if he exaggerated; she took him for himself, not for any fortune he might inherit. His people, however, were indeed wealthy; in view of his coming marriage he was immediately made a partner with his father in a big mercantile business in one of the large cities of north Germany; in consequence the young couple would be able to live in a manner and style beyond anything Benedicta had expected. The man was lovable and of an even temperament, tall and prepossessing, and apparently, in every way worthy of her. She remembered also that when approaching the bridge over the Rhrine linked arm in arm with her lover, her large diamond engagement ring glowed with all the colors of the rainbow on that Sunday afternoon.

"A lament from my happy youth," she sighed awakening from the dream in which she had seen cast upon the screen of her soul in panoramic rehearsal the story of her early life. Again she sighed:

"How have they flown, all, all, forsooth,
The joys that once were mine!"

Rousing vociferous applause that seemed to lift the roof of the Opera House announced that the grand concert was over. This was followed by the still louder noise and confusion of the vast throng getting up all at one time and the pushing and jostling to reach the door.

Madam Wenntmann was brought back to real life again. Twelve years had already elapsed since her marriage; most of this time she had been unhappy, very unhappy.

Having got their furs, scarfs and over-coats from the cloak-room, Wenntmann helped his wife into her winter wraps; this was not so easy, for the crowd was great. Neither he nor she minded the casual look of disdain with which they were regarded.

"How attentive Wenntmann is to her," some one observed, "the most gallant husband could not be more so."

"He has a reason for this display of good behavior!" a fellow near-by replied. "The biggest swindlers have the smoothest manners."

"Yes and the largest silken purse!" a listener added.

"Well said! His purse, however, will soon have nothing but the silken lining left."

"And yet, the pair had the money and the audacity to attend this Subscription Concert."

"That's nothing but show, style, business. They wish to let people know that they have money or they wish to act as if they had. I am convinced they have ringing in their ears not Beethoven's symphony but some other music."

"The beat of the auctioneer's hammer, you mean?"

"Is it that bad with Wenntmann? I pity his wife and children."

"He is wholly to blame for his lot and deserves not the least bit of sympathy. No young man had a better start than he; money, a fine business, everything. For a few years he worked and got along fine—then slowly and deliberately he forsook his honest ways and became a worthless fellow. No, such a good-for-nothing it would be foolish to commiserate. A business man who spends four months each year idling around from city to city, who passes his nights with boon companions carousing, and who sleeps all day—a man like that ought to go under."

"You seem to know him better than I do."

"Why not, the scamp has swindled me out of quite some money."

Remarks of the same kind were made by others also. The couple by this time had left the theatre. They were walking side by side without saying a word. At last the wife spoke: "Henry, did you notice anything in particular to-night in the hall? The people—"

"Were more inconsiderate and ill-mannered than ever; with their elbows they edged their

way to the exits ; and for all that they wish to be considered ladies and gentlemen!"

"I don't mean that, Henry. Did you not notice the strange looks they gave us? Even our acquaintances hesitated to acknowledge our greetings...At the same time I overheard some disquieting remarks."

"Which, I assure you, were not meant for us at all."

"Henry, I know better. Moreover, the last two or three weeks I have been tortured by a presentiment that not everything with you is as it should be. Some time ago I asked you directly whether all was right with your affairs; you gave me an evasive answer. If some misfortune is really threatening you, tell me about it, dear Henry, I am your wife and will help you bear it. There is nothing more terrible to endure than this uncertainty. In fact, I am almost convinced there is something in the air. Tell me if I am right, Henry."

This was the dialogue of the husband and wife on their way home from the concert. Just before entering the house he said: "Benedicta, excuse me; I would like to take a glass of something yet, it was so hot in the hall. I'll be back in a short time."

He left her and disappeared in the darkness while she stepped inside the door. In the dining-room the richness and elegance of which had faded long ago, the housemaid was ready to serve

tea. She was a young girl whose healthy, open face, bore the impress of honesty and innocence.

"I see you have sat up for us, Therese," her mistress remarked. "But where is Louise?"

"She was so tired, Madam," the maid replied, "that I told her to go to bed. This gave me a chance at the same time to get things ready for to-morrow morning."

"Ah, Therese, you wish to give me a hint that to-morrow is Sunday," the woman smiled. "However, it was not necessary. You know what I promised you and your mother."

"Kind Madam, I thought that after coming home so late and with little sleep to-night in prospect, that the music perhaps—"

"Don't bother yourself, Therese," Madam Benedicta laughed, "I'll keep my word."

"You are so good; what mistress beside you would do this?" the pious girl heartily exclaimed.

"By St. Martin-day it will be five years I have been with you and during this time, every Sunday and holyday morning you have gotten up and prepared breakfast for your husband, so that I might be able to go to early Mass and receive Holy Communion; I had neither to be afraid of coming back to the house late nor of being scolded. Never will I nor my mother forget your kindness. Madam, we are praying much for you, and God, without doubt, will reward you."

"That's all right, that's all right, Therese!" said the woman with a dismissive gesture. "Still

I would not do it for everybody, but with you I have always been satisfied."

The face of the maid mantled with a blush of honest pride at this praise. Her very joy impelled her to approach her mistress with folded hands and in a timid, subdued voice to say: "The one thing I specially pray for, Madam, is that you would go to church. It is so beautiful during the Rorate."

A dark cloud crossed the face of Mrs. Wenntmann as she replied: "Therese, how often have you told me this, and how often have I answered,—I cannot, I am excluded. Of course, I know you mean well," she added, "but at the same time don't mention it again."

The eyes of the servant-girl filled with tears. "My kind lady, have you forgotten that you told me to remain good and pious and particularly to be very careful preparing for Holy Communion, because an unworthy Communion is the most terrible thing that can happen?"

Unwittingly Madam interrupted the servant, remarking: "That, maybe, is the very reason why I do not attend church."

"Oh, if only the Madam would go to Confession, then everything would be put in order again, and my Confessor is so good and kind—"

"Therese, be off and go to bed! Arrange the table before going and in future mind your own business. Our paths do not run in the same direction;—good night."

“Good night, kind mistress! Praised be Jesus Christ!” The girl looked at the woman and left the room.

Fourteen days later, shortly before Christmas, the firm of Wenntmann went into bankruptcy. The importune creditors seized every available asset and spared neither the proprietor nor his family all kinds of humiliations and insults. After the receivers had taken possession of their last piece of furniture, the Wenntmanns disappeared and were seen in the city no longer.

* * *

Two years have gone by. On the outskirts of one of the largest cities in the Province a doctor is standing at the door of a simple, quiet house, ready to leave. Addressing the Sister of Charity who is watching at the bed of a sick child he said: “Please impress upon Mrs. Wenntmann that during your absence she must be careful to comply with the prescriptions I have left, because the sickness is approaching its crisis.”

“Very well, doctor,” the Sister replied. “For to-night however, I will remain in attendance.” After the doctor had gone the Sister returned to her patient, a child about two years of age. A little boy of seven years and a girl still younger, followed her trustfully around the room.

“Dear Sister Bona, tell us a story!” the children begged after a minute or two. Before she could answer, steps were heard on the outside.

Mrs. Wenntmann spent and haggard entered the room.

“Go downstairs for a little while yet, children,” the mother said languidly. When they were gone she began to weep.

“He will not permit it,” she sobbed. “He says it is not necessary, it is nonsense! He’ll not consent to have the child baptized.”

Sitting at the table with her head buried in her hands, she wept pitifully.

“Don’t lose your self-possession so easily, Mrs. Wenntmann,” the Sister encouraged her. “In reality, your husband has no right to forbid it! It was our Savior’s command that all should be baptized and therefore if the emergency arises your child will receive private Baptism. How is your husband getting on, by the way?”

“Badly enough, and for that very reason he is the more to blame for withholding his consent to have the child baptized. The deaconess at the hospital is also complaining about him; he is in his last stage, and yet he refuses to see the preacher. At most he has but fourteen days more to live.”

“And then I’ll be all alone,” she cried, “left alone with my children, with starvation before me—or—the river.”

“In the name of heaven, Mrs. Wenntmann, you have no right even to think such a thing, much less to say it,” the Sister, pale with horror exclaimed.

"It would be nothing astonishing, Sister, and who can tell but that if you were in my place, you—"

"I will not, I cannot listen to such intimations, my woman," the Sister interrupted; "no Christian has a right or a reason to despair."

"What other alternative has a person who is pursued day by day, week after week by ill-luck, whose best efforts end in failure, to crush whom a thousand misfortunes unite? Would you, Sister, have borne it easily, if over night you had lost your house and home and business and standing among relatives and friends, and were exiled from your city and thrown among strangers? If before your very eyes your home were despoiled and every article of furniture auctioned off and sold, and you were forced to leave as a beggar the very house you had entered in affluence? To this very day I cannot understand how I was able to outlive the ordeal of my husband's bankruptcy, the torture of it, the scorn and disdain, the falsity of reputed friends, the shame and disgrace. And, then, to be bound to a man who was the cause of it all—a man without will or character, who, barely forty years of age, is mentally and physically unfitted to apply himself to any serious work three hours a day! He has been traveling salesman in turn for five different firms since the crash; there were those who wished to extend him a helping hand at the time, and if he had been half a man he would at least have earned enough to have given me and the children a

meagre living—but he has lost all idea of duty and work, he has trifled with the best positions offered him and has sacrificed them all in his mad pursuit of pleasure.

And to think of it, he is the father of three children—and is upon his deathbed. His Life Insurance has lapsed, because long ago, for fully four years, he has neglected to pay a cent of assessment; and now on top of it all, comes this sickness of my child...O my father—" she sobbed, "yes, my stepmother has her triumph to-day and may laugh; it has happened to me just as she said it would!"

"Are your parents still living, Mrs. Wenntmann?" the Sister asked with sympathy.

"As far as I know, yes," she replied; "and from last reports they are getting along very well."

"Well then, Mrs. Wenntmann, you have no reason surely, to despond. While your parents live you have a refuge; go to them and under their roof await the coming of better days."

"Parent's roof—home—I have neither," the woman replied; "I was told this plainly enough. The parental door is shut against me. Ah, I understand it all now," she added after a pause.

"To be plain with you, Mrs. Wenntmann," said the Sister earnestly, "I cannot understand it. A father and mother will not desert their child and suffer her to want."

"Had you been present at the meeting you would understand, Sister Bona. My betrothed

was of the opinion that my parents would readily consent to our marriage. In fact, we left Constance and visited the city where they lived. Frederic went to call on them while I stayed in the hotel; to this very day I cannot forgive my stepmother the wicked things she thought of me. After half an hour he returned and said: 'It is impossible!' Frederic added, that when he had mentioned to my parents that his father before taking him in as a member of the firm Wenntmann and Co., had made it conditional upon the promise that we be married by a preacher and that the children be brought up in the Protestant Religion, all chance for an agreement was at an end."

The Sister of Charity looking at her with amazement asked: "But what made you consent to such conditions?"

"Sister, that's hard for me to explain," she answered. "But no matter, I have never forgotten the words my father said to Frederic at the time and which he reported to me: 'Tell Benedicta I cannot give her my blessing. I wish her no evil of course; still, real happiness she will not find in her present course. My only prayer is this, that she may find her way back to the Church from which she has excluded herself. Till that day comes, let her not visit me or my house, it would prove most—'"

Just then Mrs. Wenntmann turned her head to look out of the window at the back of the room. Some women and children were singing in the

neat little house which lay facing the adjoining garden.

“God from eternity had chosen thee
To be His mother—”

Lighted candles could be seen shimmering thru the snowy curtains and loud praying in common was heard. The woman looked at the Sister.

The latter smiling, remarked: “What is going on over there is something strange to you, no doubt, Mrs. Wenntmann?”

“Oh, I know that a very pious woman lives there who even keeps a Sunday School in her house. By the way, where are my two children? There is no sign of them.”

“I would not be astonished if they were over there with Adolphena. The old woman is wonderfully pious and good—better than the two of us together. They are meeting at her house this afternoon because it is ‘The Blessed Mother’s Housing Day’ at Adolphena’s.”

“The what?”

“An old beautiful custom of the town; no one knows who introduced it, and the priests do not object to it; on the contrary, the pastor in addressing the Young Ladies’ Sodality, said that it was a custom most poetic and commendable.”

The Sister was happy to have found a subject with which to divert the mind of the unhappy woman from her present misery, at least for a while; therefore she continued: “The custom originated in the pathetic fact related by the Evangelist, that Joseph and Mary his espous-

ed wife, in spite of their earnest search, were refused lodging in the inns of Bethlehem Christmas night. Surely it is an episode in the life of the Blessed among Women, to prove and soften the hardest heart. The inventive and poetic love of her Christian children wishes therefore to make some atonement for the cruelty of the Bethlehemites. This is how the people reason: 'Had the Mother of God knocked at our door we would have received her with a thousand welcomes. In order to attest this practically as far as possible they have introduced 'The Blessed Mother's Housing Day.'

"I have never heard of that all my life," Mrs. Wenntmann exclaimed.

"Nor is it an idle ceremony but a devotion emanating from deep faith and filial piety," the Sister added. "Nine families or nine individuals make up a circle. At each of these in turn the Blessed Mother knocks and begs lodgment for a day and a night and by each of them she is most heartily received."

"To get this started must require quite some imagination," Mrs. Wenntmann supposed.

"Not at all," the Sister explained; "a beautiful statue or image of the Blessed Virgin is brought from one house to another respectively of the circle. In the favored house a room is made ready or any convenient nook, with a table enwreathed with flowers and decorated with lights and ornaments. The statue is received at the door publicly and joyously and is then placed

upon the stand or little altar, before which the family and invited guests pray and sing as if really to their Heavenly Mother.

“As imaged by the picture or statue, they with the eye of faith see present in their home the sweet, exalted, ever Blessed Mother of God, as their guest. And during that whole day and night they are exceptionally guarded not to offend in word or thought and assiduous in every way to prove to her their love and devotion. After a sojourn of twenty-four hours the statue is taken away in procession and carried to another house where the same round of devotion is gone thru again; this is repeated and kept up until Christmas Eve. Isn’t that beautiful? Of course, there is no compulsion in all this; the people unite of their own accord and are most happy in fulfilling the obligation. And the children! They are almost frantic with delight. Where the Blessed Virgin makes her entrance the young of the whole neighborhood congregate to sing and to pray day and night.

“Adolphena is keeping ‘The Virgin Housing Day’ since early this morning—that explains the praying and the singing you have heard. If your children are attending the devotion over there with the others, Mrs. Wenntmann, permit them the pleasure to remain.”

“Even tho they are not baptized?” she uttered in a whisper marked with derision and pain.

The Sister did not quite understand but she noticed that her face was again distorted with a

terrible, despondent look, bordering on despair. With much concern she said: "Surely it would be the greatest comfort to you, could you see your parents once more."

"I have never seen my parents since some years before I was married."

"You don't say!"

"Indeed, and especially since my wedding-day how would it have been possible?

"The Catholic priest warned me solemnly against contracting marriage before a preacher; when I told him I would do so all the same he informed me that henceforth I was forbidden to receive the Sacraments. In due time the children were born. To this day they are baptized neither in the Catholic Church nor in a Protestant way. That is the worst of my care. Was it possible for me in such a state to visit my home?"

"Good God, what are you saying, Mrs. Wenntmann?" the Sister cried out in horror.

"My husband was brought up that way. He looks upon the Sacraments as mere ceremonies of no value; that the children don't know at best what they are receiving; that they will get all the Religion they need when they are 'confirmed.' All my prayers and protestations are without avail. He is kind and considerate otherwise; in fact, excepting on this point, he is not only kind but yielding and weak. His father and mother avowed it plainly to me that he wanted will-power and moral strength and that only because he was so infatuated with me and there

was hope I might reform him and keep him straight, did they consent to receive me as their daughter-in-law. I was obliged to promise that I would always treat him kindly—and this I have done in spite of his total want of character and principle; I realized soon enough that if ever we got quarreling, a separation would follow quickly and for all times; often for days in succession, I patiently endured a hell on earth—but all to no purpose."

The Sister thought much but said little. "Its no wonder that you had to suffer all this," she remarked; "but then God may have allowed these fiery trials to search you to bring you back to the path of duty and to Himself."

Mrs. Wenntmann shook her head in dissent.

"I am at the end of my resources. My happiness, my life, my future are ruined; hope is nowhere; no one can help me."

"God is still waiting for you," the Sister remarked kindly and firmly as she stepped away from the cradle in which the sick child lay slumbering. She looked over to the neighbor's house. "The children are coming out of Adolphena's; sure enough, your two were there also; here they come."

"The poor, poor children," the Religious added; "our Savior died to save them, and yet His saving grace is withheld from them. Mrs. Wenntmann, this is terrible! Let no one in the village know about it, or not a house would be rented to you in future. The villagers are the kindest

people in the world, but on this point they would be obdurate."

Suddenly the Sister cried aloud: "Look across, Mrs. Wenntmann! Fire!—it's burning! The room is ablaze—look—the—the curtains are afire! Listen, Adolphena is calling for help!"

From the house beyond the woman screamed: "Help! help me, the house is on fire!"

Quickly the neighbors hastened to Adolphena's assistance. Thick smoke was coming out of the windows. You could see the women bringing buckets of water and the men fighting the flames inside. "A candle was probably upset," the Sister suggested; "the children push and throng each other so going out. Thanks be to God, it happened by day! How fortunate that help came instantly; the men will soon have the fire under control."

Many people in the meantime had collected in the neighborhood but the danger was over. Not so, however, the weeping and wailing of good Adolphena.

The evening was at hand and the Religious was getting ready to return to her convent for a few hours after which she would come back for the night watch. Mrs. Wenntmann accompanied her to the stairs. Loud talking was just then going on in the yeard below and unwillingly the Sister and Mrs. Wenntmann heard what was being said. The owner of the house, a big tall man with a light gray beard, ruddy face and keen sparkling eyes, was spokesman. He was a Master Pot-

ter by trade, and perfect in all that pertained to his line of work.

There was in him something akin to the spirit of the olden Italian artists whose craftsmanship in Terra Cotta as extant in wonderfully artistic figurines and statuettes, is admired even to this day.

Without a teacher he had learnt drawing, modeling and coloring. Subjects of a religious character were his preference. His house, which was also his workshop, with gardens all around, was a museum filled with diminutive works of art. Many a chapel had an ancient statue or a relief touched up or restored by his deft hand. The whole town and district knew him and held him in the highest respect not only because of his genius but also and especially because he was a thorough Catholic and had a heart the kindest in the world. So it happened that when in trouble nearly everybody went to see the potter who, they knew, would help them if possible.

It was from him Mrs. Wenntmann had rented the upper story of the house. His name was Christoph. As mentioned above he was this minute standing in the yard talking rather loudly with his pious, patient wife. There was a large pasteboard-box on a bench near-by.

“Didn’t Miss Adolphena take back her box yet?” he asked. “I have looked over the fragments twice now, and each time I have come to the conclusion that I can do nothing with them. Still she leaves the box here! I am no magician and

I can't work miracles; and yet it would require a miracle to fashion a statue out of such a dust-heap."

Before his wife could answer he called up the steps to Sister Bona and Mrs. Wenntmann: "Come down and look at this debris and tell me whether I am right or not."

The two came down from upstairs and Mr. Christoph removing the covering showed them a pile of gypsum fragments large and small.

"Do you know, Sister, what these represent? Can you guess? It's the statue of The Virgin which stood on Adolphena's altar. At the time the candles set fire to the artificial flowers and the curtains, the accident occurred; it was only a gypsum statue about two and a half feet high."

"Yes, but in the whole town there is not another of that size to be had," Mrs. Christoph complained.

"If the Miss could have gotten another it would not have been such a misfortune. She is very unhappy about it. The statue was not her own and by to-morrow night ought to be carried to the next house."

"And what do you think, Sister," he intervened, "I am now expected to help her in her trouble and by magic art, out of these thousand pieces restore the old statue. Only a Thaumaturgus could do it, or a magician. Then, too, to suggest that the work must be finished by to-morrow night!"

The two women saw at a glance that it was an impossible task for any ordinary man to fit these shards together.

"I am sorry for Miss Adolphena—I told her at dinner time the wreck was beyond repair and when she came a second time and implored my wife to intercede for her, I examined the pieces again, with the same result. Now here she comes a third time!"

"Master Christoph," said Sister Bona diplomatically, "it proves the confidence she has in your ability and kindness!"

The wife followed this up quickly: "Christoph, if you had seen the poor woman you would have pitied her. She does not know what to do. When you denied her she went to the church and prayed and wept that you would help her out of her dilemma. Then it was she seemed to hear a whisper: 'Go back to Master Christoph, he will assist you.' Now she is praying again and her friends are assisting her that you may take up the work and that it may prove successful." She looked at her husband.

He shook his leonine head questioningly.

"It's impossible," he muttered while again examining the shattered statue in the paper-box.

His wife stepped up and looking at him most trustfully said: "Christoph, I pitied the woman so that I could not deprive her of all hope. You have never refused me a favor during the whole of our wedded life, neither will you deny me this one, Christoph."

"The Master looked at his wife meditatively. Then he said: "Let us take supper first. Place the glue-pot on the stove so that I can begin immediately after."

The Sister and Mrs. Wenntmann betrayed their astonishment. Was a miracle about to happen? Thereupon Sister Bona left the house for two or three hours. She would be back for the night.

Next morning while the Religious was getting ready for Holy Mass, Master Christoph was busy already in his workshop below. His wife met her at the door and whispered: "I am not permitted to say anything; but to-night—I believe, it will be ready."

When evening had come Mrs. Christoph invited her upstairs-tenants to come down. The work was done. They came down and entered the studio of the Master. Suddenly they stopped in surprise. Upon a table between a pair of lighted candles stood a beautiful and devotional statue of the Mother of God in a white dress, blue mantle, and golden crown; the blond locks fell gracefully and modestly over the enmantled shoulders. Christoph and his wife were standing to one side gazing upon the image with pride and joy.

"You don't mean to say," the Sister exclaimed,—but the Master interrupted her: "Yes, Sister Bona, it's the same!"

"The statue of The Virgin of Miss Adolphena? Why it is hardly possible!"

"Nevertheless, it is the very one," the wife affirmed. When her husband had left the room she

told them about the work. "Right after supper Christoph began. I helped him by separating the pieces and arranging them in place. You see, the fire had so affected the statue that it had burst into a hundred fragments and its thin lacquered lining had peeled off. Christoph took the larger pieces first, fitted and glued them together; then the smaller ones. Believe me, that meant painstaking work. Many of the parts were no bigger than the little fingernail; it was like picking faulty peas out of a mess; neither of us spoke a word during the time. It came to this that the finding of a tiny part still wanting in this or in that place, gave us as much joy as if we had found a jewel.

"Finally the Master said: 'Anna, it looks now as if it might be a success.' 'Well,' said I, 'we will simply not give up. I am getting to enjoy it; it's like the appetite that comes and grows with eating.' So we went on with the work. I searched around for the missing particles, he glued them together; neither of us noticed the time. At a quarter to twelve the statue was finished in the rough just as the oil in the lamp was about used up. 'The pleasure this has given me,' my husband said, 'I would not exchange for twenty florins; who would have imagined it!' Early the next morning he ground down the inequalities of the surface, sandpapered the statue and laid on the grounding and sizing. At dinner he added the gilding and coloring; and now who would believe that the perfect work before us was but a heap of fragments yesterday!"

The wife, the Sister and Mrs. Wenntmann could not cease admiring the wonderful work.

"It seems almost like a fairy tale," the latter remarked.

"Like a miracle," Sister Bona said.

"What a clever husband you have!" Mrs. Wenntmann observed. "You would have to travel far to find his equal."

"And so obliging a man," the Sister added. "All you had to do last evening was to beg him, and right away he went to work altho he had said twice before that the task was impossible."

"Good woman, it is that exactly which seems to me so remarkable; how did you manage it, will you tell me?"

"My husband asked me the same question while we were sorting the pieces. He could not understand what made him yield against his convictions. I told him that when Adolphena had come a second time only to hear from me the Master's second refusal, I was overcome with pity and that a voice then whispered in my ear: 'You must not send the maid away so; if Christoph will earnestly attempt the work he will succeed.'

"I encouraged Adolphena accordingly but made her promise me that in the meantime she must pray fervently for the Master. When she had promised this and left, I went to the church and before our Lady's altar besought the Holy Mother of God to put upon my tongue what to say to Christoph to make him yield and also beg-

ged her to guide his hand in the task I wished him to assume. No doubt, the Blessed Virgin has heard my prayer and Adolphena's."

This was the answer of Anna the Master's wife.

"What did the Blessed Virgin inspire you to say, Anna," Mrs. Wenntmann asked with curiosity.

Blushing slightly the woman spoken to answered: "You will hardly understand but Sister Bona will. It seemed to me of a sudden that I was present at the Nuptial Mass at which Christoph and I were married. The promises we made to each other at the time we regarded most sacredly and ever since we have prayed and worked together. I obeyed him in all. We were patient with each other and forbearing and lived without quarreling. On his part Christoph never refused me a favor I asked for. All this came to my mind in an instant. Then came the thought: 'Christoph and you are united for time and eternity; God made you one; you are one: of one mind and soul. Go, then, and as his wife ask Christoph earnestly and fearlessly that he should take pity on Adolphena... I did so; I believe that the Mother of God who was also a spouse, the bride of St. Joseph, put the words on my lips—Nor was I disappointed in my Christoph,'" she concluded, her face beaming with happiness.

"I have never heard the like before," Mrs. Wenntmann remarked, regarding Anna the while

as a superior being and not merely as the plain, simple wife of a potter.

"It is wonderful, as I said before," Sister Bona commented.

"It is the special grace of the holy Sacrament of Matrimony," Anna said gravely and reverently.

That night while the Sister was watching at the bedside of the sick child, Mrs. Wenntmann remained in her bedroom but without closing her eyes. Christoph and Anna, the Christian couple, were constantly before her mind. She envied the peace and happiness which they enjoyed in spite of their daily toil and cares.

What a contrast did her marriage afford! Wedded without the blessing of her parents, without the blessing of the Church, without the grace of the Sacraments of Confession, of Holy Communion, of Matrimony! All these blessings sacrificed for the sake of wealth and earthly advantages. And now without having enjoyed one single hour of real happiness these advantages such as they were, are dissipated, have fled; her unblessed union is in fragments and in ruins.

And what of the future...a child sick unto death, a husband nearing his end...a dreadful account to give, and the judgment of God to face! Her past and future shattered into a thousand fragments even as the statue of old Adolphena!

All at once she raised her head and opened her eyes tho it was dark. "The statue was shattered to fragments but it was made whole again."

This fact stood luminously out in the darkness of her soul. "Your life is in ruins; but might there not be some way of restoring it, some way of making it good again?" a voice within her uttered; it was the angel of hope whispering to her. There was a rift in the dark clouds that enveloped her.

"It is true, it was like a miracle, but then, on their part, Christoph and his wife worked with inexhaustible patience and endurance, and because they persevered they succeeded. If you would do as they did," the voice encouraged, "if you would try your best, if you would say to yourself: 'I will, I will!' and if turning to God you would pray: 'O Lord, constrain me to come to Thee and help me!'-don't you believe that God would help you and be pleased with you, even as He was pleased with Christoph and his wife when with imperturbable patience they mended the statue?"

Mrs. Wenntmann had been lying on the sofa full-dressed; she now got up. She realized that the voice within her so new, so encouraging, so holy, was at the same time earnest and admonitory. The conviction it inspired that there was still hope for her was cheering and exalting. The palsy of death was leaving her soul; warming to new courage she fervently exclaimed: "Lord, what wilt Thou that I do? Tell me, show me the way; I will obey, I will follow, cost what it may."

"God rewarded with success the perseverance of His servants in a matter so indifferent as the

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mending of a plaster statue. Don't you think your happiness, your immortal soul is a thousand times dearer to Him?"

It was the same voice as before. Most certainly she believed the words, and there was heavenly comfort in them.

"The Son of God who paid an exceedingly great price for your soul—do you think He will allow it to be lost excepting you stubbornly wish it?

"As long as you have life, have you not time, and grace, and prayer and the Church, at your disposal?

"Are you in earnest? Do you wish really to do better? Then remember: The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence."

Sister Bona at the bedside of the sick child, started from a light slumber. Loud sobs and ejaculatory prayers were issuing from the bedroom of Mrs. Wenntmann. She opened the door in order to console the woman. The latter, however, getting up from her knees, addressed the Sister in an altered voice, firm and confident: "Pray for me as much as you can. To-morrow I intend to visit my husband in the hospital. I must, I will save my children, and God will help me. Pray to Him to put into my mouth the necessary words."

* * *

The next day Benedicta was at her husband's bedside. She talked to him about the children, their immortal souls, about Baptism, the neces-

sity and happiness of faith; she spoke to him with all the power and eloquence of an agonizing heart.

He listened to her quietly. While her explanations affected him only mechanically, so to speak, another voice was pleading within him which he could not resist. He noticed for the first time the worn-out figure of his poor wife, her wan, wrinkled face, her shabby clothing.

"Look at her," he heard in his soul; "see what you have made of her. Recall the day when she stood beside you a blooming young bride, care-free and happy. Notice the change! Think of the life you have led and how you have spurned with your feet marital bliss and peace! What misery you have brought upon her by your dissipation and sinful extravagance! Has she not been faithful to you every hour of her wedded life? Did she not serve you day and night? Was her patience in your regard not inexhaustible? She can look into your face without a shudder. See what she has sacrificed for you! Youth, health, the blessing of her parents, her Church, her faith, her peace of conscience, her children, in a word, all that she had. What did you give her in return? Neglect, want, misery, poverty, shame, contempt, infidelity and the curse of God!"

"It never struck me in this way before," the dying man muttered, beginning to feel for the first time the awful responsibility weighing upon him. Respect and pity for his wife began to enkindle within his callous heart.

Benedicta had finished speaking. Her husband said nothing for awhile. Finally he turned towards her:

"Benedicta, it is true, you have always been good and faithful to me, and I—I have been the opposite to you."

"But I have not mentioned that at all," she said surprised.

"Let me speak; I must be brief. I must make at least some atonement to you. I have nothing left with which to cause you—my wife—some pleasure, excepting the children. These I gladly give to you. Take them, Benedicta, let them be baptized, let them be brought up in your faith. Consider this as a mark of my good will—at the end of my life. If I could start life over again, I would act otherwise—forgive me all!"

He was exhausted and could say no more. Benedicta prayed with him and tried to lead him to make an act of contrition for his sins. A few days after he died. He permitted his preacher to assist him in the end. Beyond he has an intercessor in his youngest child which died and left this vale of tears shortly after it had received holy Baptism. Next the widow went to the pastor and told him the story of her marriage. The two older children were baptized in the sacristy in order to forestall comment and scandal Then after eighteen years since last she had been to the Sacraments, she went to Confession again, and received Holy Communion. And now Benedicta was happy once more tho her future in

temporal matters was as dark as ever. Her husband's parents when they saw from the Will that the children were to be brought up in the faith of their mother, cut them off without a penny. However, this narrowness on the part of the children's grandparent's was bearable. Benedicta possessed a deep interior peace which only God can give and this peace gave her patience and strength to work and struggle for herself and children.

In time she wrote to her parents and informed them of the radical change that had taken place in her life. The answer was not long in coming and just in time, with the railroad fare enclosed. Father and stepmother begged the daughter to hurry home and be with them for Christmas day.

* * *

Before starting on her trip to her parents' home she called upon the priest to whom she had confided the story of her life: "You may regard your case, Mrs. Wenntmann, as miraculous," he said. "Not one Catholic in a hundred who has been married by a preacher and one especially who has agreed that the children be brought up Protestant, has ever come back to the Church. He has forged for himself chains which are almost impossible to break. But in your case God took a hand directly. No one knows why He has treated you differently from others with such signal favor. And yet it would be most instructive if we knew what secret influences were at work in your case

and the grounds upon which your conversion might be explained."

"For this grace," Mrs. Wenntmann replied, "I am indebted to two bishops, the one is a saint and the other will surely become one."

Without regarding the astonished look of the pastor she continued: "You know that I lived in Constance until I was married. Shortly before I left, there was a great religious celebration in honor of St. Conrad, which I attended. It lasted eight days, on each of which there were two sermons preached in the Cathedral. The whole city was in praise of Bishop Ketteler. He had spoken at least five or six times and was busy day and night in the Confessional. To him I went.

"He told me two things: Always to be perfectly honest in the holy tribunal of Confession; rather not go at all than conceal a sin; and secondly, to prefer to die of shame in the Confessional than to approach Holy Communion unworthily. He imposed no special penance on me. Then, too, I had promised my good mother deceased, a hundred times and oftener, to recite every day of my life three Hail Marys no matter where or what I might be. She threatened that if ever I neglected to do so she would come from her grave, yea even twenty years after her death and give me a sign.

"All this I told the bishop and hence he gave me no penance but told me to consider as such my nightly Hail Marys during the next weeks. He begged me to hold by my promise 'because,'

said he, 'your salvation may depend on it.' I remembered much of his preaching but especially the promise I had given him—this promise I kept even after my marriage. Long after I had lost hope and given up the holy Sacraments I faithfully said my Hail Marys night after night. The other things of which I was neglectful I helped my maid to observe. Never on account of me did she miss Mass or Holy Communion on Sunday and holydays."

"This, then, is the solution of the riddle," the priest said; "I understand now why it was God brought you back at last to His Church."

"And the thousand fragments into which my peace and happiness had been shattered are welded together again into a whole," Mrs. Wenntmann concluded; "God be thanked forever and forever!"

The Little Bell of St. Xavier

The Sisters of Charity were at supper in their plain but friendly refectory. The chief ornament of the room was a large Crucifix which looked down upon them with such benignity and favor as if it meant to say: "I feel at home among you."

It was the beginning of Advent and one of the Sisters was reading the life of that prince of missionaries, St. Xavier, as found in the voluminous Lives compiled by the pious, learned Catholic mystic and poet, the incomparable Alban Stolz. The reader's voice was quiet and modulated and of a compass exactly to suit the dozen Sisters at the table.

She began with a text from St. James: "My brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him: he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." Not the priest only but every Catholic should seize the opportunity whenever possible to convert a sinner. Many there are who are anxious to do so but they don't know how to go about it; by blaming and scolding they only aggravate the evil they attempt to cure.

"We will now relate what ways and means St. Francis had recourse to when he sought to bring back a stray soul." The Sister continued: "On board the ship which was carrying him from Portugal to the Indies he tried to ingratiate himself with all. He conversed with the men upon whatever was uppermost in their minds. About the navy and the sea-faring life with the sailors, about war with the soldiers, about business with the merchants. He placed himself on intimate terms even with the gamblers and apparently shared in their triumph or disappointment as they gained or lost. His prepossessing ways and the open, hearty manner with which he met rich and poor, gained for him the hearts of even the roughest and most corrupt among the passengers and crew... In the city of Goa the Saint walked up and down the streets ringing a little bell, in order to attract the fathers and mothers and especially their children to draw them to meet him for instruction in one of the central churches."

The little group listened intently. When supper was over those among the Sisters who were called to watch thru the night at the bedside of the very sick, got ready to leave.

While putting on her cloak, one of the youngest in the Community, Sister Armella, said to her Superioreess: "Mother, say an Our Father that St. Francis Xavier may inspire me what to do to touch the heart of my patient."

"Does he still refuse to hear anything about prayer, the poor man?" the Superioreess inquired. "And he in the last stages of consumption?"

"He will not live another week, the doctor said; I have tried everything: I have prayed, wept, pleaded...all to no purpose. Oh, if I only knew what to do!"

"Perhaps, Sister Armella will even play cards with him to win him over," her companions laughed. "You know St. Francis did it once or twice. Or may be she'll sing or play the violin for him; she knows how!"

"Whatever St. Francis did, I may do—why not? If only it will be of any use!"

"Don't give up hope, Sister," the Mother said, and pray much and fervently for your ward; who knows but St. Francis will help you on his feast-day! Go, then, and God bless you!"

Blessing herself with Holy Water and bidding the Superioreess good-by she left her simple, peaceful home to take up in a distant part of the city her arduous work for the night.

In a room of a double-house, Frank Schachter a man about thirty years of age, the patient of Sister Armella, was lying sick unto death. This room was situated in the half of the house rented by his married sister who gave it to him and who also boarded him at a great sacrifice to herself, her husband and children.

The brother had refused positively to go to a hospital and had threatened to kill himself if he were forced to do so. He was a man out of sorts with himself and at odds with all the world. The Sister of Charity who had been attending him at the time for nearly three months knew the reason

for his despondency and bitterness. Like thousands of other young men, he had suffered complete shipwreck, not only of his virtue but also in his faith and his Religion. He became a Free-thinker. Would that he had realized in time all that he would forfeit by his unbelief and weighed the empty baubles he would receive in return!

At one time he held a responsible position with a salary attached quite sufficient to have supported him and a family likewise, had he been minded to marry. However, before he had even thought of the last, a companion had gained his confidence who turned him from the path he had been hitherto following. This fellow had started a business of his own for which he wanted a partner and some capital.

In glowing language the stranger pictured to the young, ambitious, enthusiastic Schachter the golden possibilities of the enterprise. So it happened that the latter withdrew from the bank his savings and put them into the venture of his friend. At the same time he gave up his good position and assured income in order to become partner in, and traveling agent for, the new business. After a year of hard work and anxiety, of disappointments and chagrin, it happened to him and his partner as it has happened to hundreds before and since, namely, the firm of Schachter and Company went to the wall. The bankruptcy swallowed up the last cent Frank possessed, his credit, his prospects, nay, his very life. Deep within him the seeds of death were laid. But alas! he failed to

understand that great as were the temporal losses involved in his rash, ill-advised undertaking, they were as nothing compared to the spiritual and eternal treasures he had sacrificed in the meantime. No wonder, then, that in this pitiable condition, the young man should be filled with bitterness and hatred against the whole world. Still, of what benefit could such a disposition of soul be to him—especially in his present extremity, when he bore in his cadaverous face the counterpart of death?

“My God, how shall I approach him?” the young Sister prayed as she ascended the stairs to the sickroom. “Inspire me! Permit not his soul to be lost, dearest Savior. Count in his favor the fact that he must die so young and that he has tasted little of the pleasures of life! And thou, Blessed Francis Xavier, remember that my father’s baptismal name was Francis and how he honored you. Loan me your little bell for an hour; surely he will listen to its silvery ring!”

As Sister Armella was about to enter the room she overheard the last words of an angry dialogue between sister and brother: “If you do not wish to oblige my son Charles, have your own stubborn way about it. But let me tell you that in your condition, other things would be more worth your while.”

Having said which she threw some kind of glittering object on the sofa and left the room.

The Religious busying herself with the sick man acted as if she had heard nothing. After a while he asked: “Sister, hand me that thing on

the sofa." It was the object the woman had pitched there a minute ago. The Sister handed it to him and said laughing: "Why, Mr. Schachter, it is—a mouth organ!"

"So it is," he replied. "Hand it to me, it's mine! My sister wished me to present it to her good-for-nothing boy. I wouldn't do it; I wish to keep it."

"Does it afford you such pleasure?" Sister Ar-mella asked, the while the thought came to her:

"St. Xavier, this suggests to me a substitute for your tinkling bell—I'll promise you a Rosary if it be so."

Laughing out aloud the consumptive said: "Yes indeed—my mouth harmonica—gives me pleasure—I played on one from childhood. And this—this instrument is a good one; I got it when I was yet well. Give it to me!"

The Sister looking it over critically remarked: "It is a fine one, Mr. Schachter, may I try it?"

Taking the large harmonica from the sick man she put it to her mouth. Softly a tune was heard like coming from an Aeolian Harp.

The eyes of the invalid sparkled while the Sister played; and playing she prayed: "St. Francis Xavier, intercede for this poor soul!"

"You know how to manage the instrument, I see!" he exclaimed with interest.

"Not like you can, Mr. Schachter; I can play it a little; when I was small my brothers showed me how."

Placing the harmonica to her lips, she played in a subdued tone, soft and mellow:

“For the upland am I longing
There in bliss and peace to rest.”

“You’re an adept, Sister—that’s my favorite tune—O please, play it for me again!” he spoke in an altered voice.

“St. Francis, pray, pray for my sick man!” she pleaded earnestly in the meantime. “Help me that I may bring him around as thou wouldest have done!”

She proceeded from stanza to stanza of the popular song. The sick man’s eyes were aglow, his face almost transfigured.

Meanwhile all was quiet in the adjoining rooms. The household was listening. “Let them think and say what they please,” the Sister said to herself, “let them laugh at me and call me childish or eccentric, what does it matter, just so that I may with Thy help, O God, accomplish my purpose. Thy heavenly orchestra is the storm and the thunder and the thrice Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord! —I will try to do in my simple way like St. Francis Xavier. Thou Who has changed water into wine, bless my efforts and transform my tune into a heavenly message announcing the grace of Thy Advent and Birth to this man.”

Finally she ceased playing. The consumptive looked at her thankfully. The look, however, betrayed a regret that the music had ended.

“Another tune?” she asked smiling.

"Oh, yes, Sister,—for I can't anymore myself—my coughing prevents me—but do you, please, play a little more."

"Anything in particular?"

His eyes danced with joy. "A waltz if you please; there is nothing like a waltz on a harmonica."

Her spiritualized face blushed a deep red and her look betrayed the embarrassment she felt. What should she do? "Dear St. Francis, what would you have done in my place? Shall I say yes or no? Tear asunder the little threads of sympathy which I have spun—no—it can't be wrong; you know, O God, my intention! The Apostle of the Indies once played for stakes with the sailors, certainly not because he found it attractive—I'll play a piece, then, in six-eighths time and a little fast, to Schachter it will sound like a dance."

She began. The movement was lively and quick. But while filling the room with sprightly melody she kept her eye on the pale, haggard countenance of the listener and prayed: "I do it, my God, for his soul's sake; that I may lead him to die a happy death." The livelier and the more rapid the tune went tripping on, the more anxiously and earnestly did she beseech God for the doomed man.

All at once his face puckered up and he began to smile—then to laugh, till the effort brought on a coughing-fit which nearly choked him.

The frightened Religious hurried to his bed: "What in the name of heaven ails you?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing! Let me laugh, Sister! It's too funny! It just came to my mind—I'll relate it to you."

"Not to-night, Mr. Schachter; to-morrow."

"No, no! now—I am all right again."

"Do you know, Sister," he said, "when I was a boy sixteen years old I was sick in the hospital in the town where I was born."

We will permit the unfortunate young man to relate this incident which happened to him as a boy and imagine ourselves in his place at the time.

It was in a large building which served the city as a hospital and at the same time as an Old People's Home. Here young Frank Schachter was laid up for a few weeks. He had fallen from a ladder and broken his left arm. The fracture knitted together readily and by Christmas, altho still carrying his arm in a sling, he was allowed to attend the Christmas-Tree Festival. To his inexpressible joy he received a mouth-organ as a gift. The Mother Superior who watched over each of her patients with maternal solicitude, had noticed that young Frank was more concerned and grieved about his harmonica which had been crushed in the accident than about his broken arm. The boy knew that the broken bone would grow together again, but there was no doctor, or Plaster of Paris cast, to mend his harmonica. As a real Sister of Charity the Superioress therefore

asked a patron of the hospital to get Frank another one, larger and better in every way. A thousand times over he thanked his benefactress for the instrument and all that evening he played on it but only with the greatest reserve and care lest he might injure it.

The next day toward noon, just as the Sisters were returning from the solemn Christmas High-Mass in the parish church, there was quite a disturbance in the hospital. The five or six old women in the corner room were quarreling together. As an occurrence this was neither unusual nor extraordinary; however, the case was different in this instance because it was Christmas Day and because it was coming on to noon when so many people on their way from church passing the women's quarters, would hear the altercation above and be scandalized.

The cause of the quarrel lay in the distribution of the Christmas gifts. Each of the women had received a sugar-loaf.

Anna Barbara by weighing these separately in her practiced hand came to the conclusion that her loaf was a trifle lighter than that of Tresa Smith, whereupon she deftly made an exchange. This procedure, however, did not escape the hawk-eyes of Rosa Klasen who protested violently in consequence. The protest led to further investigations on part of the other women, as a result of which each in her turn declared that her loaf was underweight and that partiality had been shown

in the hospital; that it was plain to see, who among them stood in well with the Superioress. The wrangling became hot and bitter as the discussion widened. It was agreed that the Christmas portions would have been larger if none but the deservedly poor had been admitted into the hospital. But this was not the case. "There are those living under this roof," one of them said, "who have no right here. Who had money in their day but squandered it in luxuries and dissipation and who are now living on the parish." It was a battle royal by this time. The five or six women scolded each other and screamed, you could hear them a block away.

The Sister who had charge of these old pensioners tried her best to quiet them; but the old women were excited as if with new wine and spurned her appeals and advice. She went to call for the Superioress. The latter was either in the common hall busy with the very sick, or in the surgical ward, or down in the kitchen, or in the refectory or perhaps in the cellar or larder: you know a Superioress must be everywhere.

That very moment, the lad, Frank Schachter, with his arm in a sling, attracted by the shouts and screams issuing from the old women's quarter was walking down the corridor. It would have pleased the fun-loving boy to have listened to the discord of voices. But the Sister met him.

"Frank," she said, "I have a suggestion. Try your mouth-organ and play devotionally the tune: 'Holy Night, Peaceful Night,' I'll open the door so

they will hear you ; maybe that will quiet them."

The idea appealed to Frank and he played as sweetly and beautifully as he could. It was of no use. The women ignored the music and continued to scold.

The Sister was helpless. Then Frank said: "Sister, I've got a tune." Saying which he began to play with all his might a rollicking waltz: Daritti—diadum, daritti—diadum! It sounded twice as loud in the hall. This brought them to instant silence. They shut up.

When the Superioress at last made her appearance not a word was heard. Frank was still playing waltzes and two-steps while mischievously gesturing with his eyes toward the half-open door.

Within the room the old women were dancing gallantly to the music. The worthy Superioress suddenly felt a constriction about her throat and kept back the laugh with her apron.... She simply nodded to Frank as if she meant to say: "My presence here is wholly superfluous."

Afterwards she said to the young scamp: "Frank, you are a smart boy ; you did it fine ; our Savior must reward you for what you have done on His birthday! Then taking a large doughnut from a plate which a Sister was carrying to the refectory she handed it to him as a reward. How good it tasted!

And how sunny and genial at that time was the heart of Frank Schachter!—It was this episode that had come to the mind of the dying

consumptive and made him laugh when he heard the Sister playing the waltz.

* * *

"In those days you were still happy," Sister Armella remarked.

"That's true, Sister; I wanted...." He stopped short.

She took up the harmonica again playfully, as for a pastime. She drew forth sweet, subdued accords, in six-eighths time as before, but with a slower and slower movement. Then without any introduction she began the inimitable song: "Holy—Night—Peaceful Night."

A long silence followed. "A man is a fool often-times," said the sick man at last. He seemed to be referring to himself. "At fifteen, sixteen years of age, an irresponsible chap, I was happy, in fact, I didn't know how happy—but now I know it—if only it were possible to begin life over again...."

"O God, assist him at this moment," the Sister prayed; "speak to him!" In the same low pitch of voice with which he had spoken, the Sister answered: "It is possible to begin over again the one life God has given you."

He made an effort to reply but immediately lapsed into silence. Sister Armella had ceased playing; with the harmonica clasped in her hand she was silently pleading with God.

"Sister, play one tune more. Anything—whatever you wish."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes, dear Sister."

"Well then, since it is Advent, a time of grace, I'll play the Advent song: 'Be up, rejoice, the time of grace has come'—. How sweet and comforting the melody with its premonitions of Christmas, sounded in that dismal sickroom that night:

When she had finished he said: "That too, was very beautiful."

"Did I cause you any pleasure?" she asked.

"Yes, Sister, and I thank you."

"You on your part could cause me a still greater pleasure," she replied with a tremulous voice. "O my Jesus, the decisive moment is at hand," she prayed silently. "Do for him what Thou didst for Christopher, bend his proud head low—O St. Francis Xavier, pray for him, pray for him!"

"How so?" the sick man asked.

"If you would pray a little while with me... Or will you permit me in your hearing to lead in prayer if it is too hard for you to join."

He—the unbeliever, the Freethinker, is asked to pray with the pious, innocent Religious! That would give her pleasure! And she would pray with him as in his childhood his mother was wont to do before he fell asleep! He nodded assent without saying a word.

A gleam of heavenly, supernatural light illuminated the happy face of the Sister who upon her knees at his bedside began to pray the Our Father! It was a long time since he had heard it. How true, how soulful, how comprehensive

and yet so simple! And then the Apostles' Creed—which he had been taught and recited in his youth! Henceforth he did not feel inclined to ridicule prayer, it had become sacred to him. By and by he did his best to join in.

"I am tired now," he said.

"Take a good sleep, Mr. Schachter," the Sister said adjusting his pillows; "may I sprinkle you with Holy Water?" He closed his eyes while she made the Sign of the Cross on his moist brow.

After a little she withdrew from the bedside to a corner of the room with her eyes watching the sufferer. The rustling of her Rosary was the only sound in the room.

It was at the hour of midnight when the sick man in a husky voice called: "Sister!" A coughing spell followed. "Sister, I have been awake a long time already."

"Then why did you not call me sooner?"

"Because I was lost in thought," he said.

"Rejoice, O my soul, for the time of grace has come," the Sister soliloquized. She replied to her patient: "I hope they were good thoughts!"

"I know they were neither pious nor consoling," he answered with an attempted smile. "I could not help reviewing the years of my apprenticeship. Altho I was getting along well, I was a worthless fellow those days. During my school-years I was innocent; I knew nothing as yet of the world, I prayed and went to church; my father and mother were fond of me and I of them. Oh, those beautiful days—and the world seemed so beauti-

ful even as I imagined heaven would be; the live-long day I whistled and sang! But afterwards this was changed."

"You can make everything all right again, I promise you, Mr. Schachter," Sister Armella consoled him.

"One thing I learnt thoroughly—once and for all time," the unfortunate man continued, "and it has opened my eyes. From the day—that I joined the other side—and forsook my faith,—I thought that I would enjoy real happiness. There was no lack of gaiety and dissipation; we did exactly what we pleased without inquiring about the laws or rights of God or man. But then I did not know what has become so clear to me to-night: Formerly, when I was innocent and good I felt kindly toward all men—even tho' I might play them an occasional trick; but to-day I am out with everybody; instead of enduring them I hate them."

"Don't say that again," the Sister interrupted him, "it is an awful word. Of course, sometimes you become very angry."

"No, no, Sister, I know better. It is clear as day-light to me now. My fellows taught me to hate the rich and all those in authority; they taught me to hate all those not of our party or way of thinking, and it was my pleasure to harm and injure my opponents in every way possible. Hatred became my principle of life. Pardon me for being so plain, I hated not only the priests, I hated even—fiercely, for a long time—God!"

The Sister uttered an involuntary cry of horror and stopped her ears.

"For God's sake, for your poor soul's sake, don't say that! Oh, no,—confess it, now that you realize your guilt. You have already confessed it to me, the work is half-done. Surely you are sorry for your past sins and you'll confess them, will you not?"

"It's too late for that, Sister," he laughed in grim mockery. "Altho I realize my guilt at this moment,—a load of misdeeds of sixteen years' standing, accumulated month by month, year by year—neither a priest nor bishop can discharge for me. I know that much too."

"That is one thing you do not know, Mr. Schachter," the Sister firmly answered. "Our Blessed Savior is God and His mercy is without limits. The Holy Ghost has said: 'If your sins are numerous as the sands on the seashore,—million times a million as numerous,—they shall be forgiven you.' St. Francis Xavier told a soldier who had been guilty of every kind of crime and had stayed away from the Sacraments for eighteen years: 'God's pity is fathomless, and tho your sins were darker and twice their number you will still receive pardon if you make a contrite Confession.' And—"

"And?" the sick man raised himself laboriously and was watching the Sister with eager, starting eyes.

"Moreover, you have already told me the worst of your life—and confessed your guilt.—"

Then with sobs she begged him: "Oh, confess! Holy Confession will take this hatred out of your heart and lift from it the load of sins; it will fill it with the love of God, of your fellowmen and with peace. God is waiting for you; go to Him. He will welcome you as His prodigal son. Remember also it is Advent—Christmas is nigh, it is the time of grace."

Then of a sudden the sick man began to confess his sins: "First Commandment: I have stayed away from church for sixteen years—I have—I have—"

Sister Armella tried not to hear.

"Mr. Schachter, wait till I call a priest! Everybody in the whole house hears what you are saying."

With difficulty she brought her impetuous penitent to a stop.

In the morning at the Angelus-bell, Sister Armella after having provided all that was necessary for the dying man, left, and at his bidding went to call for a priest. "Pray for me," were his parting words; "you have brought me back to God, you must present me to Him. Then pointing to the mouth-organ he added: "Give that to little Charles, my sister's oldest boy, it will give him pleasure; I have no use for it any longer."

"All right, Mr. Schachter, I will attend to it when I return." To herself she whispered: "The poor harmonica has done its duty—thanks to you, St. Francis Xavier. The marvelous ringing of your little bell has been heard once again."

In the early morning when the church bells were calling the people to the Advent devotions, and the priest was intoning the Magnificat, there was a ready jubilant response in the heart of the young Sister Armella as she sang on her way to the Convent-home: "My soul doth magnify the Lord!"

The Governess

"It will be a hard thing to do, dear mama."

"You will have to do it, child! A principle is involved, your very position in the house is at stake. You are now Madam von Steingreff and it is your place to dictate."

"But, mama—we have really nothing to complain of in regard to the governess; she has been in this house twelve years . . ."

"The more reason to remove her, the more reason—"

"The children are fond of her; she is punctual, conscientious, reserved; in fact, I can find no reason to dismiss her."

The two ladies, mother and daughter, were sitting in the elegant boudoir of the latter, talking over house affairs. Scattered around in picturesque disorder, bric-a-brac and curios half unpacked, were lying on lounges and sofas; they were souvenirs which the bridal pair, Lord von Steingreff a widower and his second wife the

present Madam, had brought from their wedding trip. During the conversation the young wife with her tapering, bediamonded fingers, was turning the leaves of a Photograph Album. Her mother, a lady of stately proportions, tall and of ample girth, sat beside her in a silk negligé; tapping the table with her plethoric fingers and turning up her massive hard-featured face, she spoke with emphasis:

“Madeline, listen to me; listen to your mother whom you ought to trust because she loves you, and who knows so much more about life than you. I have told you already, it is a question of principle which allows of no compromise, no consideration, no sentimentality.

“The first thing a woman has to do who succeeds another is to construct a footing for herself in the house from the bottom up. A new wife must engage new servants; that’s her privilege and duty.

“There may be no cause for it in any immediate complaint but you have a sufficient reason in that they were hired by your predecessor and trained by her; otherwise at best you will be obliged to conform to their style and manner of service just like a boarding-school girl. There is only one remedy: discharge them without exception. You have not engaged the servants who at present are employed in the house, consequently you are under no obligations to them and can let them go whenever you please. There is not a particle of injustice in your doing

so. You are not obliged even to assign a reason: pay them their wages and that is all. Hire your own body of servants and let one and all know from the start that they are subject to you and that you will teach them and train them as you like and as it suits you. That's what I call acting fundamentally; it is a radical way of doing things in which sentiment and susceptibility are out of place."

"I understand you, dear mama. If necessary I will not hesitate to discharge the parlor- and the bedroom-maid and perhaps also the cook; but Mathilda,—Mathilda...."

"She is the very one! She ought to go first!" was the heartless rejoinder. "She is the living embodiment in the house of the system of your predecessor. I am fain to believe, my daughter has more pride and self-respect than to permit herself to glide languidly down stream in a canoe paddled by another. You are mistress in the House of Steingreff, you must make the fact evident."

But why, if conditions were satisfactory, the second Madam Steingreff should be obliged to make any changes at all in the regime of the first who was a most excellent manager and mother, it is hard to see. Indeed there was no "principle" at the bottom of it but a spirit of opposition, of self-assertion, and a hidden envy of the accomplishments of the deceased.

"Mama, it's all plain to me; you are so much wiser than I," the daughter said after a pause;

"but all the same, I can hardly force myself to ask for Mathilda's resignation."

"You will not be obliged to, my child," the mother answered with a sinister smile on her lips; "she will resign of her own accord. Leave that to me."

Ten days later, Mathilda Grauer, that was her name, the companion and governess till now of the two children of Count Steingreff by his first marriage, was standing in the boudoir of her new mistress, weeping.

"Gracious Lady," she said, "I assure you that I am not to blame for the late unfortunate occurrence. Never have I said a word to the children at variance with the Fourth Commandment; on the contrary, I have tried at all times to teach them the duties they owed their parents. You yourself must have noticed with what love and respect Arthur and Elsa who are eight and nine years respectively and so wide awake, have addressed you as mother. And you know that their behavior at all times was polite and deferential."

"That's true, Mathilda, I must agree with you," the young woman said, "but—"

"Miss Grauer, your specious words will not excuse you," the mother who was sitting at one end of the room, interrupted; "the little ill-bred Arthur conducted himself most revoltingly towards me his grandmother, and Elsa his saucy sister, sided with him. Do you think the children acted in this way of their own accord?

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Don't believe I am so dense that you can convince me of this."

The governess looked at her accuser calmly. "Madam, permit me to say a word in defense of the children. Arthur and Elsa were kindly disposed toward their grandmother at first. However, when she saw fit rudely to interrupt their classes at any and all times and continually to blame and criticize my teaching and their answers, they, as a matter of course, resented it. I tried to reason with and quiet them and would have succeeded if this annoyance and intermeddling had ceased. But it did not cease; it became more insulting and designing and in consequence the children became excited and untractable. This morning therefore when, in going over the Eighth Commandment with my pupils, the grandmother remarked that there are a great many lies which are not sinful and that God is not so narrow in His judgment as a governess, Arthur could restrain himself no longer and exclaimed, somewhat unfilially, I grant: 'Grandma that's wrong; what you are saying is bad; it is never permitted to lie!' This honest indignation which urged the young lord to say what he did, was painful to me, I confess; neither with word nor look did I encourage him. God knows I speak the truth. Allow me, then, to continue with the children as heretofore. But if my classes are to be interfered with as they have been the past ten days, then the results will be deplorable and I cannot be held responsible."

Mathilda spoke deliberately and with increasing ardor to the end; then she looked at her young mistress expectantly.

In her predicament Madam Steingreff bit her lips; she knew not what to do. She had reason to believe every word which the teacher had alleged against her mother.

Immediately the latter sprang to her feet, rushed to her daughter's side and gesticulating wildly with the golden eye-glasses in her hand, said threateningly: "So, then, it has come to this already. The children by the mouth of their instructress,—pointing derisively at Mathilda—are encouraged to insult their grandmother and such conduct is denominated 'energetic,' 'courageous.' Moreover, you insolent maid essay to instruct me as to what is required in bringing up children, and presume to forbid me the grandmother, and her my daughter, to enter the class-room? I think your measure is full. Do you understand me, Miss Grauer? Or do you wish that to my oral testimonial I add a written one, attesting to the fullest your unfitness as a governess?"

Mathilda grew pale as death.

"I have been here in the Steingreff Mansion twelve years," she said, with brimming eyes. "I have been constantly under the eyes of my late mistress and have strictly fulfilled my duties without a word of blame from her; on the contrary, she was loud in her praise of me and begged on her deathbed that I remain with the children at

least till they would become of age. The count is my witness."

"Please keep his lordship's name out of this," the old woman screamed in uncontrollable anger; "don't try to shield yourself behind his back. Or are you so lacking in decency as not to see any impropriety in referring to the Master of the house as your protector and defender in the very presence of his wife? Don't you know, you—you—in what position this places you?"

The face of the instructress turned scarlet red. She answered the infuriate woman calmly but with trembling lips: "May God in His mercy forgive you; it would be a curse upon me to continue longer under the same roof with you; it is well perhaps that it has come to this." Then addressing the younger she said: "I beg for my release; see that it is effective no later than to-morrow."

"Just as you please, Mathilda," she replied with her eyes fixed upon her tyrannizing mother.

"But what will John say to this, mama?" the daughter asked as soon as the governess had left the boudoir.

"Your husband? Don't bother about that!" the mother said with a sensuous smile playing about her lips. "Your husband is head over ears in love with you; you can twist him around your little finger. Moreover, you did not discharge her, she resigned of her own accord—just as I told you it would happen. Therefore he is not bound any longer by the promise he had made his deceased wife; the schoolmiss by her

action has absolved him. Should anything turn up just leave it to me."

For awhile the young woman stared out of the window reflectively. Snow and sleet were falling, a sign that winter was nigh.

A minute later the new wife remarked in an anxious tone: "There will be a scene when the children find it out; they were attached to their teacher body and soul. I am afraid they will cry and raise an uproar when they hear she is gone. I cannot deny it, Mathilda was always a most reliable girl."

"Do not disquiet yourself foolishly, child. In a couple of days we will have a substitute who will be her equal. And don't bank upon the conscientiousness of such individuals! They do what they must and no more, for the money there is in it. One is just like the other. In regard to the boy and girl, I have only this to say: children are children. If the new governess is entertaining, and if you give them a little candy now and then and send them on a few pleasure trips, in a week Mathilda will be forgotten. After that I'll go home and leave you and your husband to manage the house, conscious that I have arranged everything for you according to sound principles."

The following morning—it was a Saturday—a hack stood in front of the Steingreff mansion; a trunk and a valise were carried out and piled on its top; then a young woman veiled and dressed in black descended the stone front step, bowed to the servants who were standing at the door and

windows of the lower floor, and quickly stepped into the conveyance. The driver cracked his whip, and the horses galloped thru the rain and mist on their way to the depot. Mathilda Grauer, the erstwhile governess, had left the Mansion Steingreff forever. We may venture to say that the Angel Guardians that night stood by the bedside of the two children, their wards—weeping.

After the departure of Mathilda, the servants met in the kitchen where they bitterly denounced the lord's mother-in-law. The help nicknamed her the "Amazon," the "Major General." Some one said that if she exhibited herself at any show she would take the prize but he did not say for what. "Yes, and if she posed as the devil's grandmother," the cook added, "none would dispute the claim."

* * *

The train thundered away thru the fog and darkness. Mathilda Grauer sat by herself in the Ladies' Compartment. After ten hours' riding, the short winter day was coming to a close. The station lamps of the little towns thru which they were rushing, burnt with a fitful glare like marsh-lights on a shallow pond.

During the journey there was no one with whom Mathilda could share her grief. Even now the scene of twenty-four hours ago fazed her like a nightmare. Was it only a dream or was it indeed a reality!

Could she have believed this possible a year ago!

She was hardly twenty-one when twelve years back she entered the service of the count's first wife, the deceased Lady von Steingreff. At that time the Madam was in great straits on account of the serious illness of her firstborn. Mathilda nursed the child till its death with such care and devotion that the countess begged her to remain to look after her other children until they were grown up; in fact, she gave the maiden to understand that she would retain her forever. The governess grounding herself upon this promise made herself thoroughly conversant with the duties of her position so that the lord and lady appreciated her more and more and trusted her fully in all things. Under these conditions her relations with them and with the children became so congenial and intimate that she never ceased thanking God for His goodness in having given her this secure and happy place where, she thought, she was amply provided for body and soul to the end of her life. Therefore in spite of the work and the sacrifices which her position as instructress entailed, she looked forward to the future without concern, calmly and blissfully. And now of a sudden—all her prospects were gone! It seemed to her that she was like one safe on board a ship whom some monster has seized and hurled into the yawning floods with the appalling cry: "Strike out and manage as best you can to reach the shore."

In her despair she asked herself a hundred times: "How have I deserved this?" Then she

called upon God: "Why didst Thou permit this? What reason couldst Thou have had? Have I not always served Thee faithfully as far as possible?"

There was no response to these deep and dark questions of her soul.

As the train was approaching its destination a new line of thought took possession of Mathilda's mind: "What next? What are you going to do now? Seek a like position?" She shook her head; the question suggested something unbearable. "Never again!" she muttered. "No money, nothing, could induce me to resume that relation. I have experienced that as governess, which will do me for life!"

Marry, then? No, no.—Ten years ago she was about to be engaged. Almost upon the very eve of the day she was to sacrifice her maidenhood to an apparently virtuous suitor, she was so terribly disillusioned in regard to his character and principles that marital thoughts had never entered her mind since. Enter a convent? No; for she was well aware and her Confessor agreed with her, that she had no vocation to the Religious Life. What, then, should she do?

At this juncture there loomed up before her the figure of a simple old maid, a friend of her youth, who made a precarious living with needle and thread. Mathilda who had done much sewing for the late Madam Steingreff, was an expert seamstress; on her casual visits home she was wont to call upon her old friend and advise her in many points of the dressmaker's art. Upon one of these

occasions the latter said: "Mathilda, do you know what? Come and join me in my business as directress, and see how nicely we'll get on!"

Here, then, was a solution to her difficulties which offered the fairest prospects. She liked sewing and was skilled at it. Of course, this solution did not quiet her fears, her longings, her regrets: To sit day after day at the sewing-machine, to be wholly taken up with the fashions and the making of clothes, was common and monotonous; but especially when she thought of the bright, beautiful children who had so loved her, did the future distress and disconcert her. There was a void in the heart nothing seemed able to fill. Time and again she called aloud to God: Why? Wherefore? Why had she been taken from the children Steingreff at the very time when a thoroughly Christian instruction and guidance was so necessary to them to withstand the influence of a weak, worldly stepmother and of a wicked grandmother.

It was a dark, fierce riddle, as unsolvable as a mystery. In consequence there was no one in the whole world, she believed, more unhappy than herself,—and blamelessly unhappy at that.

The train reached Munich late at night. Here she was obliged to lay over till the morning. A few miles more the next day would bring her to the home of her friend.

Mathilda took a room in a hotel near the depot. But she could not sleep soundly. The harrowing experience in all its details of the last couple of

days was on her mind, the recollection of which caused her soul to throb with anger and pain.

Suddenly she was aroused from her troubled slumber. She heard a female voice groaning and whimpering in the next room.

"My God help me, suffer me not—" some one in the adjoining room was moaning. A child's voice replied: "Mama, dear mama, is it very painful? Will I get you a headache-powder? Here is water—"

"No, my child—it can't last much longer...I feel it. Otto—no, you, Bertha, you are larger, press the button at the door; I need—help...My God, Thou wilt not permit me, here, alone—"

The electric bell jingled.

"Come, Otto and Bertha, pray with me...till somebody answers the bell."

In a low voice the weeping children prayed with their mother. Ten, fifteen minutes elapsed; no one came.

"Bertha, ring again; I must have—a priest."

The electric bell rang loudly thru the large house but no one answered its call. Mathilda got up and dressed herself quickly and knocked at the sufferer's door.

"Thanks be to God! Come in!" she entered. Upon a bed she saw a young woman pale as death. Two children of five and six years were huddling close to her.

"It seems that everybody in the house is fast asleep," Mathilda began. "I room next door, can I

do anything for you? It will give me great pleasure."

The sick woman who recognized at once that the caller was not a maid in the employ of the hotel, looked at Mathilda with feverish dilated eyes as if she were an apparition from another world. While trying to raise her head, she whispered: "God has sent her to me!"

Mathilda asked a second time in what way she might be of service to the sufferer; but the latter still looking at the visitor with astonished, grateful eyes, answered by addressing the children: "Otto, Bertha, shake hands with the lady, God has sent her to us."

The children gave their hands. The mother tried to emulate them but she fainted away. Mathilda quieted the sobbing children and at the same time taking a little wine which she found on the dresser, she gave the sick woman a couple of spoonfuls and brought her to.

"A priest!" she begged. "I am dying."

"I hope it is only a passing spell," Mathilda tried to console the woman: "all the same, I'll go down and awaken the porter and send him for the priest or I'll go myself. Be patient in the meantime and trust in God."

"May God repay you a thousand, thousand times!" the invalid answered while Mathilda went back to her room, put on a cloak and hastened downstairs.

She was back in ten minutes. "The priest is already on the way," she said. Immediately she got

to work cleaning up and putting the room in order and dressing the children. In a little while the priest was at the woman's bedside; a server arranged a little table quickly upon which he placed Holy Water and two lighted candles. His Reverence gave the sick mother one searching look, then he raised his eyes and fixed them for a moment anxiously upon the children and Mathilda. He realized that he was standing at a deathbed. While the mother was making her last Confession, Otto and Bertha weeping were in the next room on their knees praying for her with Mathilda to whom they had trustfully taken from the very first. For Holy Viaticum and during the administration of Extreme Unction they returned to the sick room.

The priest was about to depart; he had given the woman the full consolations of the Church which are reserved for that crucial hour when the soul is ready to appear before the dread tribunal of its God; there was no reason for him to remain since Mathilda told him she would sit up with the sick that night. The dying mother, however, staid him: "Your Reverence," she said, "you must be a witness."

He gazed at her with astonishment. Without further ado the woman seized and held Mathilda's hand in her fevered grasp saying: "I do not know who you are, not even your name."

"My name is Mathilda," the maid wanted to reply, but the woman went on without halt; "nor is it necessary that I know, because I am assured

that God has sent you to me—that I might die in peace."

The children were weeping loud and bitterly.

"Do not weep now but listen to what I have to say, Otto, Bertha, later on you may weep." Turning to Mathilda the mother addressed her in a tone solemn, almost inspired: "No, I know not your name and yet I am in peace and consoled because God has sent you to me. For the last three months altho sick unto death, I have been traveling from place to place in behalf of the children. My husband had left me and has died; the children were entrusted to me; his relatives who are all Protestants, spoke for and would have taken charge of them; this, however, was impossible, because my children are Catholics and Catholics they must live and die; for this I am responsible to God. Night after night I sobbed and cried to God that He would rather take them out of this world than that they should ever be taken out of His Holy Church; I made a novena to the Blessed Mother of God who on Christmas Night was also forced to wander from place to place seeking shelter for her child about to be born; I prayed daily with my children to their Guardian Angels that they would send us help. At times it seemed to me as if there were no God in heaven and no mercy on earth. Death in the meantime had nestled in my bosom; in my extremity after having been refused admittance at two other hotels in turn, I came here day before yesterday, with out knowing exactly why. But now I know.

"In this very place, in the room next to mine, you put up for the night whom God has sent me, into whose care I can place my children, my only concern in life. Forgive, O God, my faintheartedness and want of confidence—Thou art merciful beyond the comprehension of men, infinitely wise and good—be Thou praised and thanked forever!"

Then the dying woman drew her children to her bosom. "Otto, Bertha," she said, "I must—I must leave you,—I am going to God; but I will remember you in heaven, look down upon you and pray for you. Take her by the hand, confide in her, obey her, love her, as you did me. She is your second mother whom God by a miracle has sent you."

Matilda could not restrain her tears at these touching words of the mother, while at the same time she felt the firm, confiding grasp of the little children's hands; the very suddenness, however, of the responsibility thrust upon her deprived her of speech. When at last she had regained self-possession and just as she was upon the point of refusing so heavy an obligation, a look from the priest stopped her and directed her attention to the woman who was then in her last agony, covered with the sweat of death.

Mathilda took the hand of the mother and helped her to make the Sign of the Cross upon the brows of the children. With her eyes breaking in death the last look of the woman was fixed solemnly upon her whom she had designated as second mother; she gasped: "In—your hands—I

place—my children—their inheritance—their holy faith—their souls."

In a final effort, the departing soul struggled still to say: "For the love of God,—in memory of your own mother—for the love of Christ Crucified—I beseech you—take my children—take them!"

Mathilda by this time convinced that it was the will of God that she should do so answered generously: "I will take them, I promise you in God's name; I will be a mother to them, so God help me."

"Bless them!" spoke the woman in her death rattle; her hands upraised in appeal fell heavily to her side; the priest began the Litany of the Dying.

In fifteen minutes all was over; within three quarters of an hour, long before daybreak, the mother's remains were resting in the morgue. The news of her death was hushed up in the hotel. Day was long in coming on that first Sunday in Advent.

* * *

It was in Our Lady's church early on the First Sunday in Advent. For a long while night hesitated before lifting its sable curtains from the mighty windows of this house of God. Yet despite the gloom and the early hour it was thronged with worshipers from the front to the rear. The priest was in the pulpit where by the flickering light of a single candle which burnt there, you could dimly descry his person and dimly also, perceive a large image of Christ Crucified

hanging above him. Out from the darkness the preacher was distinctly heard, for his voice was calm and ringing; he spoke beautifully and touchingly so as to hold the audience enthralled.

The sermon was based on the Gospel of the day.

A new ecclesiastical year had begun. For the first time in the season the organ had intoned the old Advent song: "Up my soul, rejoice and sing!" The Congregation took it up and sang it with spirit and devotion, filled with that deep inward joy which the mystery of Advent suggests and kindles. Taking the song for his text he began:

"Up my soul, rejoice and sing

The power and mercy of Thy King."

"Magnificat anima mea Dominum," is the sublime paean in which the Blessed Virgin sang the praises of God and her participation in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Son. This is the holy Advent greeting, the exalted Advent song of the Mother of God, who, overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, had been made the blessed bearer of the Savior to mankind. This same Magnificat intoned by the Virgin Mother, is also the song of praise which the whole Church sings out on the opening of the Christian year. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord!' Yes, my soul, rejoice and sing the power and mercy of thy God.

"This was the song of her who had been chosen to become the Mother of God; it was the song of St. John, the Precursor of Christ, the World-Herald of the first Advent, whose mission it was to announce and to prepare men for the coming of the

Messiah; it was the song of the Holy Angels who bore the message of salvation to the ends of the world.

"But most especially is it the song of our humanity for whom the message was intended; it is our Advent song, who thru the grace of the Savior have been regenerated and made friends and brethren of Christ. We have reason to cry out a thousand, a million times, *Magnificat!* 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior, for He hath done great things unto me.'

Great things, things infinitely great, He hath done unto every one of us. He has saved us from sin and damnation, sanctified us; He has promised not to leave us orphaned in this world and has called us to eternal happiness. We are children of God, children of His Holy Church, His children of predilection. As heaven is above the earth so are these favors of His love towards us above all temporal gifts. Hence it is that at the beginning of Advent the whole of Christendom sings: '*Magnificat*—

Up my soul, rejoice and sing
The power and mercy of Thy King!"

This was the tenor of the sermon.

Away in the back, close to the bell-tower, a woman of slender build, was kneeling. Snuggling up to her on her right and left a little girl and boy in tears, were standing. They were the orphans of the lately deceased; the lady who was

with them was their guardian and new mother, Mathilda Grauer.

Altho she was filled with anxiety and sympathetic grief for the bereaved ones, she experienced at the same time a deep, interior peace and happiness that God by sending her the children had given her a grand and exalted life-work to which she could henceforth devote all her gifts and zeal. She realized that the solemn promise she made the dying mother was not the result of a momentary impulse: no, the Holy Ghost Himself had put the words on her tongue. She felt that God Who had urged her to take up the work would also help her to complete it. Her soul was therefore full of confidence. *Magnificat!* welled up incessantly from her heart. The good God had led her to her goal altho by a hard roundabout way—His wisdom and goodness be praised forever!

Mathilda Grauer returned with her adopted children to her native city, where with her old friend she opened a dressmaking business. God blessed the enterprise. The children grew up under her care happy in body and soul. Twenty-five years after that sad night at the hotel—the facts are taken from real life—when Mathilda was spending the evening of her life with Bertha at the rectory of the church of which Otto was pastor, with what grateful and overpowering conviction must she have realized the power, the wisdom and the goodness of God!

The Emergency Bridge

“Gus the Retailer,” as he was called in the town of Mehrbach, had finished his letter and with a heavy flourish of the pen had signed himself: Hieronymus Rescher, Dealer in Groceries and General Merchandise. Dashing the superfluous ink back into the well he breathed more freely as he read it over. Every now and then he punctuated the reading with an emphatic shake of the head.

“So it is!”—That’ll humble her!” “It is a little too gentle yet,” the old skinny, beardless man grimly muttered. He sealed the letter, directed it and whistled for the errand-boy.

“Jack, bring this to the house yonder,” he said, pointing thru the show-window to the mansion of his neighbor whose garden adjoined his own.

“Deliver the letter, nothing more, and be back in a minute, do you understand?”

The boy nodded. Altho it was plain that he feared his employer it was equally plain from his mischievous look that the lad was glad to be the bearer of the fiery message. He knew what the letter was about; in fact, he was partly the cause that it was written.

An hour before, he had helped the grocer water his garden. They were at the bed of radishes

when the Master was called into the store. An instant later the boy was on the dividing garden-wall shielded from observation by thick shrubbery and hazelnut-bushes whence he surveyed at his leisure the park of the neighbor Sir Hoplitz, the count's steward. This was a garden without equal!

Flower-beds on all sides bordered the footpaths of white sand which in large concentric circles led round a gushing fountain that was stocked with goldfish. A grand two-story residence stood at one end of the enclosure, and at the other, in the center of a well-kept lawn, a cozy summer house. Jack was just dying to turn a couple of somersaults on the inviting greensward. He was prevented from doing so because there was company in the Garden-house. Sophy was there, the daughter of the steward, about twelve years of age; she was a refined and reserved girl whom everybody liked. Opposite her sat poor little Clara, Gus the Retailer's daughter. She was a girl to be pitied. Hunchbacked, her head sunken between her shoulder blades, she was a dwarf beside Sophy, altho older in years. Her face was thin and acute as is common with the deformed of her class—but all the same with her lovely eyes she looked so good-naturedly at her companions and her busy little tongue talked so happily to them, as if there were not a thing the matter with her.

Clara was the grocer's only child. After the death of his wife, Mr. Rescher never married again; his daughter was his one concern and joy.

This man at other times so "fussy" and preoccupied, who seemed to live and strive only to enrich himself, always closemouthed and unsocial, a sober, cool reasoner and calculator in matters of buying and selling, was a different person as soon as his daughter returned from school and especially so when at night they were sitting in their shop together. He did everything imaginable to neutralize the physical handicap under which the child was laboring.

He helped her to forget her misfortune. The girl on the other hand clung to her father with an indescribable trust and loved him above every one in the world. He went over the school lessons with her, prayed with her, instructed her, watched over her, and kept from her whatever might hurt her in soul or body. The daughter repaid her father as best she could. Under his tutelage she stood first in her class and was the favorite of the priest and of the teacher.

At the annual examination, when his little bent, hunchbacked, deformed Clara, standing up and with perfect composure and assurance as the best in the school, would answer the Inspector so fearlessly, artlessly, readily and correctly, the grocer was filled with inexpressible pride and happiness. If to this was added what was by no means unusual, the public praise of the Examiner, and when with moist eyes looking at the little cripple before him, he would place his hand in approval and blessing on her head, then did the father in his excessive joy forget that Clara was

misshapen at all, or wish that she were other than she was. For quite a time now his daughter had been helping him writing his letters and looking over his accounts so that as never before, father and child had become indispensable to each other.

Clara became acquainted with the steward's daughter Sophy at school. The latter's parents were very anxious that their child should rank first in class; the mother particularly wished it on account of the position and standing of the family. But neither her daughter nor any other pupil could manage to outdo the grocer's child.

Sophy was a sweet, good girl, but a little slow at her books; with the help of Clara, however, she was able at best to hold the second place. This is how it came about that the two girls became intimate friends and that the grocer's child was a frequent visitor at the steward's.

Still, the lady of the house was not overglad to see her. That the tradesman's daughter should surpass her child at school, was painful to her pride, and, moreover, it was offensive to her taste to see the poor miserable cripple at her house come and go as she pleased. Only for her husband she would have stopped these visits long ago.

In the Summer-house beside Clara Rescher and Sophy Hoplitz, the grocer boy on the wall saw the two younger sons of the steward and another lad, at the sight of whom his blood began to boil. He knew the fellow. He was a cousin of Sophy,

about fourteen years of age who had visited her house often before during his vacations. Arthur was his name. The grocer-apprentice could not bear him for the reason that the younger than the fellow, the latter in wrestling with him, threw him, not in a fair way but by trickery. It was plain to every one that Arthur was in an insolent mood this day; he was teasing the girls beyond endurance.

Evidently Clara had turned upon him in a biting retort. The bully seemed stunned for a minute as if by a blow. Then he straightened up and with arms akimbo and head erect, he said something in reply in which the words as the grocer-boy heard them, "ugly, repulsive, hump-backed witch," were conspicuous.

Sophy gave a scream at the gross insult to her friend. The boy on the wall noticed that Clara weeping was covering her face with her hands. That very moment the steward rushed upon the scene and gave his nephew Arthur a terrific box on the right and left ear so as to stagger him. The apprentice saw this with malignant delight; then he jumped off the wall into the grocer's garden.

He got back just in the nick of time for his Master was upon him. "What are you doing here?" Mr. Rescher inquired.

"Arthur over there called Clara a humpbacked hex and the steward slapped his face for it," the boy blurted out. The apprentice had calculated right; his employer without question-

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ing him any further was entirely taken up with this bit of information about his child.

“What?” the man exclaimed, the vein on his temple swelling like a whipcord with anger; “insulted my Clara, scoffed at my child on account of her infirmity? The scoundrel, the miserable scamp!”

The boy went into details.

“Clara must come home at once,” the grocer insisted, “I will call her myself from over the wall. I will not permit my child to be derided! Get me a chair.”

A minute later, the grocer standing on a chair was looking over the wall searching for his child. The Summer-house, however, was deserted by this time and the children were gone. His attention was arrested by loud voices in the vicinity. The count’s steward was angrily disputing with his wife.

“Arthur is a cadet preparing to become an officer,” she said to him imperiously; “do you wish to spoil his career? If his companions hear of this he will be expelled from their company.”

“The impudent scoundrel!” the man replied. “He is a contemptible coward, nothing more, or else he would not have insulted an unfortunate defenceless child.”

“I beg your pardon: looking at such a hunchback, such a figure, such a dwarf, can a person help laughing?”

“Arthur did more than laugh.”

"Well, supposing he showed his disgust and loathing?" she continued, "what is that but a proof of a refined nature?"

"My God...and do you call that educating children?" he replied furiously.

His wife putting her hand on his shoulder, said: "Louis, allow me a moment to tell you what has been on my mind for a long time. The friendship between Sophy and the grocer-girl must cease. It is degrading and I must take the part of my children."

"You are talking in riddles," he answered.

"I am the mother of our children," she went on, "and have the first right to dictate how they are to be brought up. If they are to be educated in the highest sense then all that is ugly, mean, low, and deformed, must be kept from their sight."

"And in this category do you place our neighbor's child?"

"Yes, I do. And I don't want to see her in this house again."

The grocer Rescher with difficulty suppressed the fury within him struggling for expression.

Lady Hoplitz added: "I must look to the future. What will become of the cripple at best? She cannot marry; she can't fill a position; therefore she will be unable to support herself; the outcome will be that the parish will have to support her."

"You mean hag," Rescher muttered.

"It would be a fine thing for the people then to say that she is an intimate friend of ours. Indeed if these relations between Sophy and Clara are kept up we will some day have her on our hands. Those of her kind know only too well how to exploit the friendship and condescension of their betters."

Mr. Rescher jumped from the chair. "Enough—enough—" he exclaimed, "I can stand no more. That contemptible woman—that proud fool would choke me—that—that—"

Boiling with rage he rushed into his house and wrote the letter which his errand-boy carried to Mrs. Hoplitz to whom it was directed:

"In view of your heartless remarks in the garden about my daughter Clara which I overheard, I am glad that she will not visit your house again. She has no reason to do so. Thank God, she needs no help in her books and by her own efforts holds the first place in class. As regards the language which is heard and used in your garden, it is by far better that my child in future be guarded against it. Moreover, no one will ever be obliged to support my child, I am man enough to provide for her; I only hope that more favored children will not in time stock our workhouse, because the proverb says, that pride is the harbinger of want. Excluding from my remarks the steward, your respected husband, I conclude by repeating that if you and I live long enough, we

may see the day when your insolent fears in regard to my child shall be reversed.

Respectfully,

“August Hieronymus Rescher,
“Dealer in Groceries and General Merchandise.”

The letter was delivered. What effect the reading of it had on Madam Hoplitz who in her rage tore it into a thousand pieces, is more easily imagined than described. From that day forward Clara never again entered the house of the respectable neighbors. The deeply offended Mr. Rescher would greet Mr. Hoplitz whenever he unavoidably met him but as for his wife, he passed her coldly without as much as touching his old felt hat. Clara tried her best to mollify her father's anger toward the Madam, but without result. On her part the little cripple harbored no resentment against anyone and at school was exceptionally kind to Sophy. When the latter on a certain day whispered to her that she was going to a boarding-school, the parting scene was tender and tearful between the two friends. They promised to remember each other and as tokens interchanged holy pictures. Sophy gave Clara her most beautiful one, a celluloid print of Our Lady of Altötting, and Clara in turn gave her friend a picture of St. Joseph in gorgeous colors, with this stanza written at the foot:

“The Infant safely in thy arm,
O blessed Joseph, thou didst bear;

Unto the Holy Infant's care
Commit us, 'gainst all future harm!"

* * *

Fifteen years had elapsed. A Sister of Mercy was proposing a walk outdoors to a young woman whose face was pale as death and whose eyelids were scalded with tears. "It is so beautiful to-day outside; the sun is shining, the birds are singing, the air is zephyr-like,—come let us take a walk; I will accompany you. We will go leisurely up the main avenue to the Cathedral; Father Gabriel preaches at four o'clock; that will give us time enough. After the sermon, he said, we can see him. I am sure he will be able to advise and comfort you. It seems a dispensation of God that he was sent here at this very time. Place yourself under the patronage of St. Joseph; to-day is his feast, he will not slight your request."

The young lady shook her head in doubt and dissent. "I have given up hope," she said in a lifeless tone.

It was an old-time custom at the Cathedral to preach the panegyric of St. Joseph in the afternoon on his feast day. Upon this occasion as was usual, the church was crowded. An emaciated Religious in a Capuchin habit, with a gray beard and dark, searching eyes, was in the pulpit.

"By way of introduction," he said, "I will tell you a story that occurred in far-distant America. Its northern part, the Dominion of Canada, is

watered by the St. Lawrence, a river which for volume of water ranks first in the world; these waters, the outpour of the Great Lakes, empty into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On the whole, Canada has about 2,500,000 Catholics, the vast majority of whom live up to their faith.

"In the heart of this vast territory, directly north of Lake St. Peter, is a substantial town which is growing from year to year. The Catholics had a church in the place built of logs in Pioneer Days; it was so small and miserable for the present needs of the congregation, however, that the parishioners resolved to erect a large, solid, durable new one, of stone. This was quite a venturesome undertaking. For altho giant trees were common and wood cheap, stones were very scarce. They had to be carted from beyond the St. Lawrence; this was extradinarily expensive. To bring them from the quarry to the bank, to load them on the scows crossing the river and off again at the landing, was slow, herculean work. There was no bridge to span the mighty stream from three to four miles broad for no bridge would be able to withstand the shock of the turbulent waters and mountains of ice which would assail it in wintry weather. But the Catholics were not discouraged; they awaited the coming of winter. The cold in that region is then so intense that it freezes up the tumultuous stream from bank to bank so firmly that the heaviest wagons can safely cross and use its surface as a highway. Immense piles of rock were accumulated in

the meantime on the shore, to be carted over in December, January and February.

“Winter came—the one of 1881—1882; but strange to say there was no ice that year as every Canadian knows. At times the shore was fringed and occasionally there was even a thin layer of surface ice, but that was all. The dark, turgid floods destroyed every icebridge in formation. Half the winter had passed in this unpromising way. For once the bleak and fierce January and February swayed it mildly over the snowfields of the North. In the beginning of March thaws heralding a premature spring were perceptible in the sheltered nooks and valleys. To picture the congregation with its hopes blasted or at best deferred for another year, would be difficult. Bigotry was rife in those days. The non-Catholic people, especially the preachers, laughed and scoffed at the Catholics and told them publicly that God in this extraordinary way wished to show that He wanted no Catholic church. On the first Sunday of March, the priest called upon his parishioners to pray to St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, the Protector of the temporalities of the Church, to help them in their present distress.

“‘We wish to build a suitable house for his divine Foster-Son, therefore he, the Carpenter of Nazareth, must advise and help us,’ said the pastor.

“Prayers were immediately begun and kept up incessantly day and night for three, four, five days.

"All of a sudden the weather changed. The cold began and increased and became intense. Immense blocks of ice swept down from the Michigan, the Huron, the Erie Lake, blocking and clogging the river; they jammed and piled upon one another and welded into a solid frozen mass just across from where the granite pile lay. Logs and beams were dragged back and forth to test the sustaining power of the gorge and finally it was proven that for a width of three hundred feet from shore to shore there was safe passage for teams and loads of any weight or capacity. This was Tuesday.

"Wednesday, St. Joseph's day, came in with a terribly cold spell and a colder night, so that even the last vestige of hazard was removed as to the strength of the bridge. Next morning early, every available cart, dray, wagon, of Catholic and non-Catholic, a hundred or more, drove up and halted in front of the church where Mass was being said in honor of St. Joseph for the laborers that they might be preserved from accident. Then man and horse proceeded to the river, crossed the ice safely and returned with loaded wagons back to the town. So the work went on from morning till night. The emergency bridge, St. Joseph's bridge, held safely to the end. Even the non-Catholics on the opposite shore looked upon its formation as a miracle and begged the Catholics whom they considered as its proprietor for having obtained it by their prayer, for permission to use it. By that night all the granite blocks and

stones had been safely removed to the new church site. The work had hardly been completed, when, before the next morning dawned, the ice gorge heaved and groaned and with a thunderous crash broke into huge fragments, which, set into motion by the resistless current, began majestically to move out, on their way to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and to the sea. That same year the church was built and finished and dedicated to St. Joseph."

This was the story Father Gabriel related from the pulpit. While all eyes were still turned on him he drew a paper from his sleeve.

"If there is any one here," he continued, "who might doubt the story I have told, then let him look at this letter which the priest of the parish in question, my friend and school-companion, has written me concerning this wonderful occurrence. The letter is dated August 14, 1882, the very day when the church was being roofed over. It will vouch for the truth of what I have related.

"Now then you know how St. Joseph built the emergency bridge in Canada. But this is only one of the hundreds of bridges thrown across the stream of life by the holy Patriarch, the foster-father of Jesus, over which he has helped his clients who came to him trustfully in their need. In difficult, in dangerous, in apparently hopeless cases of trouble and misery concerning the body and concerning the soul, he has countless times proved himself a guide, a protector, a foster-father, to those who besought him."

The preacher after praising the exalted station and virtue of St. Joseph, begged his hearers in conclusion, to love the great Saint, to honor and imitate him, and to appeal to him in their necessities. The afternoon devotions were over. The people had left the church. Then the Sister got up and whispered into the ear of the veiled lady in deep mourning beside her. "Now let us go and speak to Father Gabriel."

The young woman arose. "Will any one be able to help me?" she sobbed. "My case is hopeless."

"You have come here in honor of St. Joseph, he will not pass you by on his feast day. Come, the father is awaiting us."

"You have suffered a great deal, Gracious Lady," the Religious kindly addressed her as soon as she and the Sister had entered the sacristy.

She nodded, while unloosening her veil. The tears were streaming down her face as she said: "My husband—had made me unspeakably miserable; I hastened for refuge to my mother,—but she too—was no more!" Convulsive sobs interrupted her.

The Religious went over to the crucifix and stood there awhile to give the woman time to relieve herself in tears. Then turning round he said: "Would you mind telling me something of your past? The information might suggest to me some plan to help and comfort you."

"I can tell it all in a few words," she said, "altho a detailed account of it would fill a book. My father was steward and treasurer of the Count

of Mehrbach ; he died when I was seventeen years of age. No better man lived, in fact, he was too good, even weak, as I see it now. Upon his death-bed—I had just returned from a boarding-school—he made me promise solemnly that I would always observe the Commandments of God and of His Church and if ever I should marry that I would take for a husband none but a good, thorough Catholic. I made the double promise with all sincerity.

“After father’s death we moved to the Capital.

“My mother rented quarters in an apartment-house for herself and children, for she had a great deal of money left her by my father’s Will. The money was her undoing. My two brothers had dissipated their part of the inheritance before they had finished their studies. During their college years I was alone with mother. It was not a happy time for me, Your Reverence,” she remarked. “Mother was—was—not very religious. She strove to bring me to her point of view and in proportion as I withstood her she got to dislike the Church more and more.

“She forbade me to correspond with the Sisters, my former teachers at the Academy ; she put irreligious books in my way and at times made me listen to her reading them ; she introduced me to company where our holy Religion was scoffed at and calumniated. Many times mother told stories about priests which I knew were false. Think of it, father, how I felt, when my very conscience forced me to brand my mother a liar ! Upon one

occasion she illtreated me because I publicly and firmly denied her calumniating statement that I had told her, a priest had asked me indelicate questions in Confession. When we were alone I thought she would choke me for having contradicted her lying story."

"Poor child, poor child!" exclaimed the Religious pityingly.

"The worst was to come. I was asked to marry a young man, an Officer in the Reserves and a Wholesale Merchant; despite his fine, polished manners, the moment I saw him I distrusted him. My Guardian Angel warned me against him. The longer I knew him the more I disliked him. Moreover, I heard many scandalous things about him. In my presence it is true, he was reserved and never uttered a word contrary to faith or morals. My mother talked to me about him day and night and how happy he would make me; all my objections, my resistance, my tears, counted for nothing. She had given him her word, she said, therefore I must take him; at least I must agree to an engagement. Afterward when I wished to postpone the marriage and break the engagement, she said that she could never consent to that, it would involve my good name. Oh, how many tears that courtship cost me! I simply loathed the man, he seemed so strange; and the more familiar he became the more repulsive I found him. Like a beggar, on my knees I besought mama to release me from him, to let me remain single, promising to stay with her forever. All

to no purpose. The wedding-day was fixed and arrived. For the last time, the night before the marriage, I again implored mama for the love of God to permit me to retain my freedom before it was too late—her only answer was to call me a fool."

"You approached the altar then?" the priest asked in pity.

She nodded, her eyes streaming with tears. "Intimidated and threatened I became his wife and before three weeks had elapsed I was convinced that my partner for life was a man of unspeakable vices, and what is more, of vices that were crimes. I remonstrated with him, only to be laughed at and abused in consequence. When I went to mama for advice, she merely shrugged her shoulders and put me off with empty phrases; finally she forbade me to come to her with my 'lamentations' because she could not stand any excitement and because, she said, every woman has to put up with such things—and so forth."

"Your mother took a terrible responsibility upon her self," the priest remarked.

"She crossed over to eternity with even a greater than that on her soul," the young woman added dismally. "When after two and a half years of this ill-starred union my husband left me and absconded with all my fortune and the firm went bankrupt, I fled to my mother, believing that she still loved me; my situation was terrible and there was no one else to whom I could go. She had heard in advance of the dis-

aster. Arriving at the house, I found it closed; all my knocking and calling and sobbing was to deaf ears. No one within stirred. At last a door opened and as I entered—oh!"—

She covered her face with her handkerchief and trembling from head to foot with the horror of it she stammered: "I cannot go on, I cannot!"

The Religious suspected what the sequel would be; he looked at the Sister questioningly. She whispered: "Cyanide."

"My mother had not courage to share my misfortune of which she was the sole cause; but all the same it was not necessary for her to despair. We could have lived together and freed as I now was from that man—he had fled to South America—I would have worked and slaved for her till death."

"From a cursory view of your case," the Religious said, "it is questionable if you were really married at all. According to your statement, consent which is absolutely necessary for the validity of marriage, was totally wanting on your part."

With surprise the lady looked at the priest but immediately after she shook her head sadly: "Under other conditions nothing could have pleased me more than to be entitled to resume my maiden name in public, but—in the present case —no—no."

"Perhaps you are afraid of the Chancery costs? If so, I can quiet your fears. It is an idle tale that on account of the expense involved, only the rich and the noble can afford to bring their cases

before the Ecclesiastical Courts. The poor need not pay a penny."

"I did not have that in mind," the woman replied; "but this, that my happiness and future are ruined; my life henceforth must be cheerless and aimless."

"Life as long as it lasts, is never purposeless. Think of Him Who holds our destiny in His hand, Who knows how to draw good from evil, and at the same time remember the feast we are celebrating."

"Your Reverence, that was a touching story you told of the ice-bridge, but—" The lady shook her head again as an expression of her hopeless sorrow.

"Maybe St. Joseph will build an emergency bridge for you too," the priest consoled her; "maybe this very sacristy is the starting point which will lead and direct you to a better future. There are openings and places of many kinds in which you can be of great service. If you have confidence in me and desire that I suggest a sphere of action to you, then leave me your address."

Blushing the lady replied: "I beg you to excuse me, I thought Your Reverence already knew it. My address is: Sophy Hoplitz—that is my maiden name; I am the daughter of Sir Hoplitz, Steward and Treasurer of the Count von Mehrbach."

"I know the count and the place," the priest answered. "Hardly three months ago I gave a mission there. The count's family has moved to

the Capital; the Mehrbach mansion has been turned into an asylum for young girls and children. It is an ideal home in which a pious lady supports a Kindergarten and a Sewing and Cooking school; the Young Ladies' Sodality meets there also and it has social rooms and an entertainment hall for the working-girls and others. The garden surrounding the place is most beautiful."

The young lady's eyes filled with tears. "The home of my childhood!" she sighed. "How happy I was in my father's house! Strange to say, I have heard nothing of all these changes. How did they come to pass? Did the count make the founding?"

"Yes, to some extent. He sold the house and park for a trifle, not to speculators but purposely to a certain person. The present proprietress is a young woman who is devoting her whole fortune to charity; the house is hers and with the help of the parish she keeps it up. This most estimable maiden has asked me to look around and if possible engage a good woman who might assist her in managing the institution. She is sickly and therefore cannot do as much as she would like. The work is not hard and the place is agreeable; a routine of quiet ordinary duties, no cares, with food and lodging. Would you like to accept the position?"

The tear-stained face of the young lady was transfigured and rejuvenated at the welcome of-

fer. Before accepting she inquired: "But who is the woman in charge?"

"She is a maiden most unprepossessing outwardly and who if the judgment of the world were true could not be happy. She is deformed and a cripple."

"Clara Rescher!" Miss Sophy joyfully exclaimed.

"That's her name. Do you know her?"

"She was my playmate, my best friend, all the time I lived in Mehrbach. How did all this come about?"

"It was an immense surprise to all," the priest replied. "The father of the pious, happy Clara, had made more money with his Grocery than the shrewdest man gave him credit for. Day and night he worked in order to provide for the future of his child. No one in Mehrbach suspected the business he did. At his death he bequeathed his daughter more than a 100,000 florins. It was a great satisfaction to him, the last in his life, when he bought for Clara the palatial residence and park of the count which for so many years had been in charge and the home of Hoplitz the Steward. Every detail of the purchase was attended to by him before he closed his eyes; he united the count's property and his own into one estate which according to his Last Will attested by the priest and the mayor, will revert to the parish of Mehrbach after Clara's death."

In confusion Miss Sophy covered her face with her hands. "To think of it: this girl, this dar-

ling Clara, my mother prophesied would some day become a charge to the parish—and now she is owner of—my father's house, I am beholden to her for a shelter!"

"Would you consider it beneath your dignity to become assistant to Miss Clara Rescher?"

"On the contrary, Your Reverence!" she answered decidedly. "No, indeed, for I now realize, that this is the emergency bridge St. Joseph has built for me, spanning the dismal past with a peaceful future. No—for I need not be ashamed of Clara; she who has always been so kind to me will receive me in my misery with open arms. Fifteen years ago when we parted from each other, we had pledged eternal friendship; if I perhaps looked upon the promise at the time as trivial, I know that she considered it as something sacred."

Then opening her prayer-book, she handed the Rev. Father a picture, saying: "Here are her words in writing."

Looking at the picture, the priest remarked with pleasure: "See, it is St. Joseph again!" He read the stanza Clara had written:

"The Infant safely in Thy arm,
O blessed Joseph, thou didst bear;
Unto the Holy Infant's care
Commit us, 'against all future harm!'"

And further below: "As a token of eternal love and friendship, from Clara Rescher."

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“Well then,” said the Religious, “I will write Miss Clara at once. Would it not be well for you to do the same?”

“I think it will suffice, Rev. Father, if you enclose this picture in your letter,” Sophy replied. St. Joseph has taken the matter in hand; he will attend to its finish.”

In a couple of days Sophy Hoplitz went to live with Clara Rescher the friend of her childhood. To-day she is convinced that the bridge of St. Joseph has spanned the chasm in her life and given her a way to a happy, meritorious future.

The Alley House

Madam Eliza Groger opened her large, old-fashioned prayer-book, laid it on the table and folding her hands, sat gazing at the dull, languid flame of a miserable oil-lamp on the table.

“Advent has come, and Christmas the most beautiful feast of the year will soon be here,” she said to herself. “Christmas!” she uttered the word again unconsciously, and then started up at hearing herself talk. A sigh deep and sorrowful, or rather a groan escaped her lips while her head filled with sad reminiscenses drooped to her breast. Yes—those Christmas days of the past she will never forget; never—especially the last one when from the very pinnacle of happiness she was hurled to deepest misery.

For the hundredth and hundredth time the catastrophe of that year, like a dream had passed before her eyes.

Yielding to the pleading and urging of her parents she had married a well-to-do elderly man who looking upon her merely as a creature of his passions made her as unhappy as possible. By his sudden death she was released from this bondage and at the same time left a widow with a rich inheritance. After a year of conventional mourning which she duly observed, luck seemed to smile on her and it looked as if fortune by send-

ing her a new suitor was honestly trying to repay her for the sorrows of her first venture. A man of the best standing in society, prepossessing in appearance, of polished manners, with the highest official appointment in prospect, became acquainted with her at church, spoke for her hand and was accepted. The only hesitation in the courtship was this that she put off the proposal for an immediate engagement to Christmas Day. She wanted the Infant Jesus to insure her happiness; she wished to place under His protection and that of His Blessed Mother, her betrothed, herself, her future. Everything for the occasion had been prepared to its last detail... Then suddenly her hopes were crushed by a bolt from a clear sky, the recollections of which on this Christmas night, forty years after, was as vivid as ever.

It was a few days before Christmas—the stately tree reaching to the very ceiling had already been set up in the grand parlor of her home and had partly been decorated and hung with gifts—when the rumor of a bank crash began to spread. The suitor called upon her at her mansion next day and after telling her that three or four other institutions were in imminent danger of going under with the Central Bank, he asked her where she kept her deposits. Frightened at the news and more so at the question, she informed him that all her money was in the Central Bank, the officers of which were the administrators of her property. Upon hearing

this, he seized her by the arm and like a crazy man screamed: "In the name of heaven, quick, quick, secure your papers! Demand your money immediately—there may still be enough on hand to meet the run if you are early—rush, for everything depends upon it!" she well remembered, that when with her escort walking and running, she had reached the bank, an immense crowd of people blocked her way; they were depositors, pushing, scratching, striking, each other, cursing and damning the officers, weeping, sobbing and wailing, in a frantic effort to get their money.

She was still hundreds of feet from the building trying hard but unable to get closer, when all at once she heard a mighty, awful shout of rage and despair rending the skies: the mob had seen the large placard which had just been posted on the windows proclaiming in bold type that the bank had failed! Millions were lost; any number of people who had confided their life-savings to the institution with the hope in this way of providing for their old age and against want in the future, were made the poorest of the poor in an instant.

Among them was Eliza Groger, the young widow.

This catastrophe happened a few days before Christmas.

The sequel was not long in coming. On the day following, she received a letter from her suitor filled with crooked explanations and lame apolo-

gies that under the circumstances he could do nothing but consider the engagement as indefinitely postponed. In other words, he had cast her aside. This last she did not mind half as much as that the fellow pretending love and respect, had merely for the sake of her money so artfully dissembled his hypocrisy. It was a good thing she was rid of him.

In this condition, with a heart so fearfully torn, with a soul disillusioned and on the brink of despair, poor and alone, she celebrated Christmas day two days after. What awful hours! Her happiness melted away to nothing; her future—she had been evicted from her house penniless and left to her own resources. A new epoch in her life had begun which was to last forty years. The man who in so mean and cowardly a manner had deserted her in her distress, she never saw again nor asked about. He died many years before the second epoch in Eliza's life had closed. It is true, his image would obtrude itself occasionally upon her mind but as quickly as she was cognizant of it she banished the apparition of the traitor as she would a vision of sin.

For the last twenty years Madam Groger was living in the alley-house No. 127 Amalia Street. She was very economical in all things; she greeted but never visited her neighbors nor invited them to her room. That she was a most estimable woman everybody knew but none could tell exactly what she did to pay her rent and for a living. All that was known was this that for the past ten

years the silent woman had been hired to keep the mayor's office in the Government Building in order. This, then, to date, is the life-history of Madam Eliza Groger.

* * *

To-day she had returned to her home earlier than usual. A weakness that had been growing upon her during the past few weeks had reached the stage of exhaustion. The heavy fog overlying the city and the acrid fumes emitted by the many chimneys may have been contributory thereto. The soul, likewise, of the aged woman was in a despondent mood on this particular day. Her mind was rehearsing the many years of her monotonous, joyless life. Somebody in the alley was playing on a string-instrument.

"It's Bohmak the broommaker," she muttered, "he would have done better to have kept his music for some other day!"

The musician, however, thought of himself and not of others. He followed up the opening accords with a melancholy tune—it was a mandolin he was fingering—full of sadness and passion. For the second piece he chose a song still more depressing. She could not help listening to the music of her Bohemian neighbor, whose room was directly below hers as he sang louder and louder:

"The sun is up to light the day,
It fills my room with gloom and dread;
Turn from this place the glaring ray
Where all my hopes lie dead."

"Where all my hopes lie dead," the singer repeated with a weird cadence in conclusion.

The old woman could not restrain her tears. She wept bitterly. A moment later, the fickle musician was playing a gay Mazurka and all the windows facing the alley were opened to catch the tune of the versatile Bohemian.

"Ah, well!" said Madam Groger, raising her head, drying her tears and smiling: "It is but a short interval in life from the sad to the gay after all; everything changes. Who knows but God has been kinder to me than I can understand or even imagine!"

She took up her prayer-book again. First she pulled out the upper drawer of the bureau half way, then she began to pray ardently and earnestly. What her motive was in doing this—that was her secret; no one certainly would ever have suspected why at the end of each day she prayed for awhile at the open bureau.

After this she got up slowly, locked the drawer, and seated herself on the bed. An hour later the lamp had gone out and the old widow was fast asleep. The room was still as death. It was more than sleep, however, that had mastered Madam Groger; she was lying in a dead faint.

* * *

"Have you heard the news?" some one at the dinner-hour called in at the door of the cobbler's who lived in the room to the left on the first floor of the alley-house.

"Have you heard the news? Madam Groger was found abed in a dead stupor. It is another proof of the wretched social conditions in our city; a person might starve to death—"

"Would that you instead were in an unconscious stupor, or at least your gab, you Socialist, you red Democrat!" the cobbler answered the young fellow at the door, who, judged by his clothes belonged to the honorable Guild of Painters.

The lad laughed and said: "It's true tho, I saw it myself."

"Saw what yourself? When did you see it? Madam Groger has never permitted a mortal man to enter her room," the cobbler went on without looking around; "no man, and least of all such a regicide and born anarchist as you are;" he added, while a big chunk of bacon was on its way to his mouth.

"All the same, I saw it!" the painter who slept at the cobbler's avowed. "The Groger woman did not go to work yesterday nor leave her house today and when they knocked at her door early this morning and again at noon there was no answer. Of course, when the social conditions are in so miserable a state thruout our country it's no wonder. Finally the police opened the door and found—"

"Whom?" the shoemaker's wife exclaimed in fright.

"Whom?—do you ask, Mrs. Hammerl? Why, none but old lady Groger. They found her in bed

almost dead as a stick. The police said: 'She is dead!' Naturally that was nonsense, quite common enough among policemen. But the doctor said: 'She has fainted; it is extreme weakness; she wants rest and something to eat.'"

"She needs care. But who'll care for her?" the cobbler's wife asked. "Are they going to take her to the hospital?"

"I don't think so; she's too self-willed for that. She said some time ago she wanted to remain in her room till she died. Her upstairs' neighbor Mrs. Sophy has offered to look after her."

"Mrs. Sophy? How can she manage it when she must keep her sewing-machine rattling every day until midnight so that a person cannot sleep!" the cobbler growled.

"Yes, and Mrs. Sophy's daughter, that proud silly Miss who acts as if she were a coroneted princess and will not stoop to greet a common laborer, has also offered to assist," the painter added.

"You know Madge, do you?" the wife teasingly asked the lad. "She has boxed your ears, eh?"

"He would die with pleasure if the Miss would condescend to slap his face," the husband remarked; "but she would not defile herself touching such a blood-red Socialist even with the tip of her parasol."

"I beg your pardon, I am a decent working-man and if ever I cast my eye upon any woman I'll have something worth while to offer her—but she's beyond my reach. I want nothing to do

with Madge because our views of life could never be made to harmonize. In the present instance, however, I must give her credit for having acted generously; she and her mother have volunteered to nurse the old woman till she is on her feet again. That's fine; it proves that Madge and her mother have a heart in their body."

"Didn't you offer to help them out?" the cobbler's wife laughed.

The painter thumped his head. "Confounded," he exclaimed and turned around, "I almost forgot it! I promised Madge—no, her mother,—I promised—confounded! How stupid I am—that's exactly what brought me in a hurry to your house, Mr. Hammerl, notwithstanding you were at dinner—Mister—Mrs. Hammerl, out of pure pity and charity, would you mind sending your oldest daughter, to—to—the parish priest or to a Capuchin—to whatever place is the nearest, to bring one or the other immediately to attend Madam Groger!"

Mr. Hammerl stared at his wife who with a smile winked suggestively. "So, then, that's what you came for?" the shoemaker said. "But, my dear boy, it's impossible. The oldest must go to school right away and work out a few problems on the road besides; her way, moreover, leads in an opposite direction from the parish priest's and the Capuchins.' You'll have to go yourself."

"But your Tony, he's such a smart boy, with eyes sharp as a robin's—surely he'll do."

"My Tony—Tony—he's too small," the wife answered, "and then, too, he had toothache only yesterday."

"Upon such a mission you can't send a child, Edward," the man replied. "I know very well that you'd go half an hour out of your way to avoid the parish priest; your conscience is uneasy."

"That's not true," Edward started up. "I am an honest laborer who doesn't care a rap for any par—" He did not finish the word when he saw the look and gesture of the good but determined cobbler; instead he substituted a more fitting one and finished: "for any priest!"

"It makes no difference, Edward, you'll have to eat the sour apple yourself. You better run and call the priest or he'll be too late! You promised Miss Madge to do so. Now hurry and run!"

"It will not hurt you for once in your life to do a kind act for a poor creature at the point of death, especially for one who lives under the same roof with you," the wife added.

"I wouldn't mind going for the doctor; I'd also go to the drugstore with pleasure; I'd bring the old woman bread and water or anything," Edward explained. "I am a kind-hearted man and love my fellowmen—but to call for the priest—never! Couldn't Miss Madge and her hypocritical mother have found someone else to send upon such a stupid errand than me who has certain unchangeable convictions? No—and yes—Oh!"

that the heavens would send a thunderstorm to prevent my—”

“It’s winter, Edward,” the cobbler interrupted, “you can’t expect that just to please you, heaven will work a miracle and send a thunderstorm. You better hurry! I am going up myself directly to see the sick lady, for tho she was rather exclusive in her ways she’s a baptized Christian and it’s not right to let any one die without giving all the assistance possible.” He got up and said his prayers after meals; Edward hastened from the room.

The latter did not give up all hope yet. As he was leaving the corridor he heard a wheezing and clamping sound of some one busy in an adjoining room.

“Good day to you, Mr. Wenzel, Master Craftsman!” he greeted the broommaker with dignity while examining the instruments, a guitar, a mandolin and a violin, hanging on the wall opposite the door. “Have you much work?”

The Bohemian eyed the intruder suspiciously. “I see no reason to say: Welcome,” he grumbled in an undertone. The painter extended his hand: “Mr. Wenzel is a good Christian,” he said.

“So I am,” the broommaker answered emphatically. “I go to Mass on Sunday and don’t stay away like a heathen.”

“Thanks, Mr. Wenzel, but since you are such a good Christian, of course, you’ll gladly do a Christian act; however, it must be done at once.”

The broommaker gave the painter a searching, distrustful look: "I'm a good man and a pious man," he muttered threateningly, "but Wenzel Brazik will not permit himself to be led around by the nose; who attempts it will find that in that case Wenzel Brazik ceases to be a good man and a pious man."

Edward stepped back at the ominous words.

"Mr. Wenzel, the old woman Groger upstairs is in a bad way. She was found unconscious. Mr. Wenzel, you're a good Christian; will you please call for the priest?"

The Bohemian was under the impression that Edward was trying to make sport of him.

"That's strange," he grumbled; "but what of it, I have to work and have no time to spare. Why don't you go yourself?"

The painter laughed. "Mr. Wenzel is surely aware that I'm not a friend of the priest. I beg Mr. Wenzel therefore to do me the favor and run for the priest; I will return the kindness in some other way."

"Do you mean it?" the broommaker asked getting up.

"As surely as I stand here, by St. Nepomucene."

"Well, then I will go. But one thing more.—Mr. Edward has nicknamed me Bohmak. You'll have to take that back, and never again call me that?"

"Never again."

"Mr. Edward scoffed at my playing and at my violins."

"I'll never do it again, Mr. Wenzel. You have first-rate instruments and you play fine."

"Very fine; we Bohemians all play very fine; we pass thru the world without a discord in our life; we can't help but play and sing fine."

"Your playing is all right, Mr. Wenzel, I admit."

"Mr. Edward, you have laughed at my art. Wenzel Brazik is able to compose and play compositions of his own. Mr. Edward said I ought to write music for cats to sing at night and let songs alone. You'll have to take that back also."

"I'll take that back solemnly, Mr. Wenzel. You are a composer of the sweetest songs. You enliven and rejoice the alley with your art; we all unite in applauding you."

The broommaker's face lighted up with happiness.

"Now then, I'll go for the priest," he said and was instantly on the way.

The priest came in about ten minutes. Madam Eliza Groger who in the meantime had been brought around, received the Last Sacraments and in her extremity allowed herself to be waited on as a child. Miss Madge and her mother took charge of the room of the sick woman which until now had never been entered by friend or stranger; they did everything so quietly and gently, it was a pleasure to watch them. When the priest was leaving he found at the door awaiting him the

cobbler and his wife, the broommaker, Edward and two girls, sisters, who occupied a room together on the third floor; they were all anxious to hear how the old woman was getting on and ready to offer their services: the one had spirits of balsam ready, another chocolate, a third, Camomile Tea, and so forth.

The priest was surprised and delighted at the sympathetic interest of these poor people in the sick woman and told them if Madam Groger were not so completely exhausted he would go back to inform her of the kindness of her fellow-lodgers in the alley-house. He promised to do so as soon as she was better; the news will cheer her up and make her happy.

Upon his return the priest saw the same interest still prevailing. The fainting-spell was but the beginning of the last sickness of the widow; during the time it continued her neighbors did for her all that it was possible to do. Her room was kept scrupulously clean. The stairs leading to it and the little vestibule were attended to by the two sisters; the broommaker carried up the coal and water; Edward looked after the medicines at the drugstore; the cobbler made her a present of a bottle of old wine; another of the roomers brought flowers.

Of the eight parties who lived in the alley-house not one but showed his sympathy in some practical way. They visited the room daily which heretofore had been closed against them, stayed a moment, asked about the widow's health, left

a little present for her with their best wishes and departed. The sick woman who in the past had been, so cold and reticent, barely greeting her neighbors and never conversing with them, was now totally changed. Most cordially she thanked her poor kind friends for their services and her face betrayed her gratitude and happiness even more than her words could express.

“She has never been so sweet and approachable as now sick abed,” the cobbler’s wife remarked; “I never thought she could be so loving and lovable.”

“I don’t deserve all this attention,” the aged widow told her nurses, Madge and her mother Sophy, many times; “why should I who have never bothered about my neighbors be made so much of? I don’t know how I will ever be able to repay them.”

“There is no repaying necessary, Madam Groger,” was the invariable answer; “the poor help one another more readily than do the rich; you would do the same if our places were reversed. The greatest joy you can give us is to get well again speedily.”

The sharp remarks about her, however, and what motives pure or interested actuated the sympathizers in waiting upon her, Madam Groger of course was not apprised of.

The most of them stood by her from real Christian Charity, a few from curiosity, one or two from mere human respect, afraid of being ad-

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judged heartless, and a few no doubt helped, because others did so.

Cutting remarks nevertheless, were not wanting. Edward, for example, called her the "high-browed aristocrat" who was too high-toned to speak to others. "She has found out by this time that there are worthy people in the world besides herself"—was one of the gentlest things he and others said of her.

Still that which in the beginning was with some purely formal and external in this general assistance tendered the sick widow, by and by took on the character of real love. Her deep gratitude for everything that was done for her captured the hearts of all. In the whole alley-house henceforth, she was loved and spoken of as "Aunt Groger" or simply as "Auntie."

In the course of time she got strong again. Just two days before Christmas she was able to sit up for the first time. Her mind became active as formerly. Hence it was that she awaited the coming of Christmas day with anxiety. The sad reminiscences of the past like dark clouds were piling up again in the horizon threatening to overwhelm her on that blessed day.

"Oh, that Christmas Eve were past!" she sighed.

In the meantime something was going on, on the lower floor. There was a great deal of mysterious coming and going. At night when the aged woman lay asleep all the tenants of the house would meet in a common room and Wenzel Bra-

zik the broommaker and master of four instruments, acted like the veritable mayor at these gatherings, so full of dignity were his words and bearing. By chance you could sometimes hear upstairs what sounded like a chorus of voices and string instruments coming up from the first floor. Madge was doing double service at the time; first she attended the widow till she got her asleep and then she stepped downstairs to the meeting.

* * *

It was Christmas Eve. The falling snow was silently covering the houses and streets; the windows were lighting up with the varicolored Christmas candles. Peace was again descending from heaven to earth to fill the hearts of those of good will.

Madam Eliza Groger was comfortably seated in a rocker near a table; she begged that as a favor her friends would not visit her that night. How she prayed and thanked God that the past—was past! There was a blending of joy and sadness in her face. How kind the neighbors have been to her—she never would have believed it! There must be a great many good people in the world after all, she reflected; thank God for that. With folded hands she gazed lovingly at the little crib on her bureau. She got up to light the tiny candles that stood on either side of it.

But listen! Out on the corridor there was a noise. Slightly deaf as she was she heard footsteps and whisperings outside her door. She

would rather that no one would visit her on this night—she wished so much to be left alone!

What's that? A sweet soft melody on a mandolin, so chaste, so heavenly! Was it not at her very door? Of a sudden she heard the time-beat and a command; then like an angel's choir, the voices of men and women in concord sang out:

“Holy Night! Peaceful Night!
All is dark, save the light
Round yon Virgin-mother and Child
Holy Infant . . .”

It was that ancient most popular Christmas song prized and sung the world over. The widow stood entranced for a moment, then falling on her knees she prayed before her little crib. Two stanzas had been rendered; this was followed by variations on the theme played as a Violin Solo. The door was now opened quietly and Madge stepped in carrying a Christmas Tree in her hands which lighted and laden with gifts she placed upon the table.

The aged widow was nearly overcome with emotion. Immediately after, Mr. Hammerl the cobbler entered with a beautiful wreath in his hand.

“Dear Madam Groger,” he said, “all the tenants in this house unite in congratulating you on your recovery; every one from the top to the lower floor is glad to see you up; because you are alone and have no one, and the poor ought to and must stick together, we have agreed to bring you these flowers with our best wishes and to cheer

you with our song; moreover, if by New-Year Day anything is wanting on your rent, we have enough laid by to meet what's lacking; but the chief credit for this testimony and token of our love to you, Madam Groger, is due to our neighbor the broommaker, Wenzel Brazik, who had everything in hand. It is the hope and wish of all, that the Little Savior will nestle in your heart and that you will soon be as strong as ever."

Having spoken this simple and beautiful greeting he left the room abruptly while the broommaker struck up two or three accords on his mandolin to introduce the last stanza of the song.

Thru the open door the happy old widow could see all who had participated in the concert: Madge and the two sisters and the cobbler's wife with her eldest daughter were there and other women and girls; the men were represented by the shoemaker who sang bass; Edward the red Socialist, a clerk in a store near-by, and others from the house; but the broommaker who sang tenor, lorded it over all with his fiddle-bow and kept them in time and tune with nods and looks.

The song was nearing its end:

"Angels on this Christmas morn
Jubilate that Christ is born,
And promise peace and promise grace,
To every child of Adam's race."

At its conclusion Madam Groger exclaimed:
"I can stand no more! Pardon me—give me time

to weep—to weep for joy—May God reward you a thousand-fold!"

Sobbing she sank into an armchair. The serenaders gave her one more kindly look and departed.

The widow was awakened from a sound sleep; the church bells were ringing solemnly, calling the people to the grand Christmas High Mass which the bishop was about to celebrate in the Cathedral.

No other sound, no profane noise was heard, all nature was resting and still—a deep peace brooded over the mighty city. The snowfall had ceased; the brilliant sun looking out of an azure sky had lighted up the snow-entmantled earth so that it shone as if vested in burnished silver. It flooded the widow's room likewise with its smiling rays and magically transformed it; her soul was filled with joy and peace.

Tho fully awake her eyes were closed. The festival of Christmas Eve was passing before her mind; her soul echoed and re-echoed with the song "Holy Night! Peaceful Night!" and the playing of the violin; her heart was still throbbing with happiness at what her neighbors had done to make her happy. The suddenness of the joy of the last evening seemed to her like a dream at her first awakening so that she exclaimed: "My good God, how happy Thou canst make the soul with beautiful visions." Then from her bed she looked out into the room and her eyes were fixed

on something. She shook her head: "I am certainly awake for I hear myself talking," and again her eyes were centered on a certain spot. Finally she sat up.

Ah, there on the table stood the little Christmas Tree with its quenched candles, red and white and green; with golden nuts and ruddy apples and glittering spangles pendent from its branches; at its very top was an angel in a robe of silvery white. Near-by stood a rosebush in bloom and a wreath, the same which the cobbler had presented with the good wishes of the neighbors. The tree was the one which Madge, Mrs. Sophy's daughter, had brought in while the visitors in the hall were singing: "Holy Night! Peaceful Night!"—It was no dream, then, but a reality.

"I know that I am in bed, otherwise, I would verily believe that I were in heaven," she soliloquized.

Following upon this sweet thought came the awful recollection of that dread and dark Christmas Eve forty years ago which destroyed her happiness and ruined her future, but strange to say for the first time since then she was able to think of the disaster with a clear and calm mind.

"Under Thy patronage, Most Holy Child," she prayed, "I had placed myself and my engagement and Thou hast stretched forth Thy mighty arm and hast preserved me from a union with a worthless man. The grasp of Thy hand was painful tho' kind; Thou hast saved me, Holy Child

Jesus! Altho I have lost all, Thou didst never forsake me. And now Thou didst send me a compensation—such a wonderful—rich compensation! The one whom I had intended for husband forsook me in the dark hour of trial—while posing as an educated, honorable man, and my lover!... In an hour of still darker trial when I stood on the threshold of the grave, forsaken by all, in this little room, they came to nurse me, to look after me, to console and provide for me in every way possible—they, who were strangers to me, uneducated, poor, rough, and uncultured.

“They sang to me last evening and brought me a little Christmas Tree—who was it that urged them to these noble deeds but Thou, dearest Divine Child! Thou hast touched their hearts with Thy love and by so doing Thou hast repaid me a hundred times for what I have lost. They did it disinterestingly—they could not expect that I would repay them; they did it from an unselfish Christian Charity. Thou hast accordingly given me the finest Christmas in all my life.”

The widow prayed a long while in thanksgiving. After an hour or so she arose and laboriously dressed herself. Then she placed a chair close to her bureau and pulled out a drawer as she had often done before.

“My prayers will not concern themselves with you anymore,” she spoke in a loud tone; “I know now, I know it now, and that’s the greatest of all my Christmas joys, that I know it now. Thanks be to God!”

She stopped, frightened at herself, and hastily pushed in and locked the drawer.

During the course of the day the priest called to see her and the next day the doctor; the latter left with an anxious look. Half a week later the two gentlemen met in the sickroom and departed together. Madge and her mother saw plainly enough that the old lady was not making any progress toward health but that she was going backward.

The last day of the year, Madam Groger had finished her earthly course. The priest was with her at the end and all the neighbors kneeling about the bed, in the room and in the hallway, assisted her with their prayers. In her delirium she babbled gleefully like a child about her Christmas Tree which Madge had brought her and the flowers and the sweet music of "Holy Night!" She lingered during the whole of the octave of Christmas. The Christmas Tree was still standing on the table beside her, decked and laden with beautiful things. It stood guard at her side as she lay dead in her coffin on Sylvester Night.

Candlemas Day was at hand. There was a great commotion in the house in the alley. Each of the eight resident parties had received an official letter summoning them to court in connection with the Last Will of Madam Eliza Groger. Ten o'clock was the hour fixed when they must appear: Mrs. Sophy and her daughter Madge; the cobbler Hammerl and wife; the two sisters in

the third floor; Edward the painter, Wenzel Brazik the broommaker, and the others.

They met a couple of blocks from the Court House and each one asked the other what in the world it was all about.

"What's up, I wonder?" Edward who wore a large flaming tie, inquired. "It's to badger us I guess! It'll not take much for them to prove that we killed the old woman Groger and divided her clothes among ourselves as was done to St. Joseph of Arimathea in Egypt by his loving brethren."

"I suppose they argued: 'Everything must be shared; what's thine is mine,' just like your associates; don't you think so, Edward?" the cobbler laughed mischievously.

"That's nothing to joke about," Edward replied angrily; "we Socialists are honest people and only for the sake of humanity and charity do we ask for a division of goods. That's the grandest principle we have and if the time comes when it is put into effect we'll have heaven on earth."

"We haven't advanced so far yet, Edward," the cobbler dryly commented and pulling out his silver watch he added: "If you don't stop your gabbling we'll get to court too late and be fined."

They proceeded on their way but full of anxiety as to what was in the air.

"We are honest people, we did nothing but help the old lady," Mrs. Sophy lamented.

"That's exactly a case in point to prove how wretched is the management of the Government

and of the State and of the Police," the wise Edward interposed. "Nothing but ingratitude is our lot and to be squeezed dry like a lemon. Until Society becomes Socialistic there is no hope for betterment! I'll not be afraid, I'll ask the gentleman on the bench, what they mean by pestering honest people who have sacrificed their time and money for charity's sake!"

"Wasn't the room of the widow locked immediately after her death?" one of the girls inquired. "Surely there can be nothing missing then."

"Maybe they'll ask us what pay we expect for the services we have rendered her," the cobbler observed, "and for the loss of time." The remark made him laugh.

"Who is to do the paying?" his wife interrupted; "for my part, I don't want any compensation."

"Who knows, perhaps she has put us in her Will and left us a large inheritance!" he remarked good-humoredly: "What do you think about it, Mr. Wenzel?"

The latter sighed: "Sure, I've had a premonition."

"Of what? Of an inheritance?"

"Not a premonition of money or of a reward but of arrest.

"And what for?" the poor tenement lodgers inquired; "what are we charged with? Brazik, did you do anything wrong?"

"Did I do anything wrong?" the poor broom-maker repeated sadly; "unfortunately I organized

a concert without the permission of the Police."

"When was that, and what had we to do with it?" the two sisters anxiously whimpered.

"Christmas-night when we serenaded Madam Groger deceased, with 'Holy Night! Peaceful Night!' and I fiddled and directed. I will testify however, that it was done without charge and that I alone am guilty because I wielded the baton."

"I wonder if such a thing were possible?" the shoemaker's wife asked.

"Anything and everything is possible in such a State, under such a miserable Government," this came from Edward, of course; "it will never be better until—"

"Until everyone wears a red necktie," the cobbler added. "Edward will then become a red necktie-maker which will pay him handsomely in a Socialistic State."

In the court-room the renters of the alley-house waited until certain gentlemen had arrived and had seated themselves stiffly and gravely around a table.

"Last Will and Testament of the deceased widow Eliza Groger," the Chairman announced. After attending to the necessary formalities, those present were notified that the widow a week before her death had made a Will that was valid. The eight parties therein named who with her had occupied the house standing off from Amalia St. and facing the alley, she had made sole heirs because they had been so kind to her in her last

sickness. The ready cash on hand from which she had already deducted a part and given to the Administrator of her possessions, namely, to the priest for Masses for her soul, was to be divided into eight equal parts. Mrs. Sophy and her daughter Madge for greater service rendered were to receive two; one part was to go to the cobbler, one to Wenzel the broommaker, one to the two sisters, one to Edward; the remaining shares to the other three individuals designated in the Will.

Her furniture was also given away; the bed to Wenzel because his own was but a makeshift of one; the bureau to the shoemaker's wife; Madge was willed the picture of the Blessed Virgin; the rest was to be equitably divided among them without dispute. The Will concluded with the hope that God would reward abundantly all those who had so kindly and generously assisted her in her last illness, and with the wish that they would sometimes remember her soul in their prayers.

The priest who was present at the reading of the Testament was radiant with joy.

Then the Chairman put the question: "Mr. Hammerl, are you willing to accept the inheritance? Mrs. Sophy, are you willing . . . ?" Each one was called up in turn, and each one answered yes. Edward the painter, however, was so confused at the turn of events that forgetting all his socialistic principles he also answered yes. After individually signing the document, the Will was declared released.

Out in the corridor the parties from the house in the alley looked at each other dumbfounded.

"Well, how much is it that we are really going to get?" one of them asked. "How much did the Madam leave?"

"Be glad that it has turned out this way," the cobbler replied. "Yes, and I'll light two candles in thanksgiving," the broommaker added with a great sigh of relief, "one in honor of St. Wenzel and one in honor of St. Nepomucene, that I escaped arrest for having given a concert without permission."

The priest coming up to the happy beneficiaries said: "I am going to the rectory now; meet me there in a quarter of an hour and every one will receive what is coming to him."

At the time specified all those concerned in the Will met at the priest's house—not excepting even the painter Edward who but a couple of weeks ago was so averse to calling on the priest in behalf of the dying Madam. On his way to the rectory he bought a black necktie and conducted himself meekly as a lamb. He wore a crape band round his left arm.

In the office of the parish priest there were eight large envelopes lying on the table each one properly directed. The one for Mrs. Sophy and her daughter was thicker than that of the others. As Administrator of the widow's property the priest put on an official mien and said: "Madam Eliza Groger of blessed memory had been very rich in her youth; she was made poor

by the failure of her bank. After some years she received a small per cent on her deposits. This money she laid by as a provision against sickness and old age, subsisting in the meanwhile on her small daily earnings. It was an odd custom of hers every night before going to bed to pull out the drawer in which this emergency fund was secreted and pray God to enlighten her as to how she should dispose of it in case of death. For years past she had been hesitating whether to apply the money to this or that good purpose. All at once she was confined to her bed by a dead faint and the consequent sickness, during the course of which her fellow-roomers with whom she had never or but rarely conversed, were emulous in nursing, consoling and helping her. When therefore, as a climax to their unselfish devotion they serenaded and gifted her on Christmas Eve and filled her sad soul with a joy pure and great such as she had never tasted before, the Child Jesus inspired her then and there to make these good simple benefactors her sole heirs. This inspiration upon which she immediately acted, increased her Christmas joys two and threefold for the reason that it enabled her to show her appreciation for their unselfish sympathy.

"From beyond, let us say, from heaven,—for she suffered long and much, patiently and with holy resignation,—she is rejoicing with you here present to-day."

Taking up the envelopes the pastor continued: "After deducting all the necessary funeral ex-

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penses, the Court-fees and the Inheritance tax there remains for distribution among you 16,850 crowns and seven farthings."

The listeners uttered an involuntary cry of astonishment. The priest went on to explain: "That divided into nine parts, means per part 1872 crowns and 64 hellers. You will please in turn sign these receipts as I hand you the money. I hope you will make the best use of it and that you will always remember the deceased."

Trembling and with palpitating hearts they approached and signed with shaking hands; there were tears in the eyes of the women.

They left the rectory beaming with happiness. To each of them such an amount of money was an immense sum the possession of which filled one and all with inexpressible joy; however, a keener joy underlying this was the consciousness which each beneficiary felt that he did not stand back but that unsolicited he did all he could for the widow in her need.

Mr. Brazik the broommaker, who was the most pious of them all, bought two large candles of two pounds each which he carried to the church. The one was lighted in honor of St. Wenzeslaus, the other in honor of St. John Nepomucene. At the same time he felt a gentle urging to buy a small candle in honor of his countryman Master John Huss. For altho the latter was burnt at the stake as a heretic at Constance, Wenzel, like all Bohemians, had a kind of nebulous veneration for him—just because he was a countryman of his.

However, in this case the wish stood for the deed. Upon leaving the church he started for home in a roundabout way. He stopped at a music-store. For fully an hour he gazed longingly at a fine cello in the show-case.

He turned round half a dozen times, again and again to look at the instrument. "Wenzel will come back," he said to himself, "he can pay cash for the cello." We can take it for granted that the big violin soon found another owner and that it stands to-day in the shop of Wenzel Brazik.

The painter Edward has become quite a changed man. He has nothing more to say against the State and the Police and the Capitalists. He has a feeling that now he belongs to the class of moneyed men himself. When the cobbler asked him how soon he was going to divide his inheritance with his associates, he answered. "Not till they begin to divide first. Moreover—"

"Moreover, what?" the cobbler asked.

Edward was confused and had no reply ready. After the painter had left the room the wife said to her husband: "Watch and see, Madam Groger's money will soon draw Edward away from the Reds. Perhaps then, when he becomes a practical Catholic again Miss Madge will accept him; if so, they will have a nice sum of money to start with."

Whether this has come to pass we do not know. But to this we testify that in essentials, all that we have related above has really happened and in Austria, of course; for only in that country do they reckon in crowns and hellers.

The Wings of the Christmas Angel

“Pshaw, how can anyone in my condition enjoy life! Will I ever get rid of this catarrh and nose-dripping and suffering from cold feet! It’s just as I have said: New moon on a Wednesday is an astronomical misfortune that always bodes ill. Physical science is self-contradictory at best. For example, when the barometer rises, the wet snow falls; surely if consistent, the two ought to go up and come down together. But then, I’ll take what comes. Anything for wife and child! Keep up your courage, don’t give up. You’ll always find a friend. After all, I’m glad things are as good as they are!”

With these introductory remarks, Papperinger, Scene Painter at the royal theatre, threw off his mackintosh and swung his felt hat up and down to rid it of the snow-water which had gathered in its broad brim, while every now and then he cast an affectionate look at the bed in which a tiny bit of humanity was slumbering sweetly by the side of its mother.

“Well then, your trip was not for nothing?” the wife asked looking at him with her pale face and dark, tired eyes. “Can we have the Baptism tomorrow? Who is to stand for the child?”

“Dear Apollonia, the question is more easily asked than answered; the name of the infant’s

godmother is still a secret of the future. But I'll get one, you can depend upon your husband! God has sent us the child, He'll send us a godmother also. We have had eleven already and He has never disappointed us before. Is'n that true?"

"It's getting to be harder and harder for us to secure a sponsor for our chidren; we are so poor," she said; "moreover on account of your position we ought to have one who has some standing in society."

"You're right, Apollonia. Then too, I'm afraid we'll have trouble also choosing a fine, well-sounding name for our twelfth one. An ordinary one will not do. How do you like Christina?"

"But, John!"

"Let me explain myself, Apollonia. First of all, Christina is a pious name and secondly the young queen of Spain is called so. It is a very imposing name. We may not be able to leave our children much but we'll give them the finest names in the calendar. Therefore we'll call the newborn princess of the family Papperinger, Christina!"

The pale-faced wife began to laugh: "Why, John, we've got a Christina already!"

"What? Which of them is called so?" he asked in surprise.

"Our five-year-old Teena. Was she not baptized Christina?"

"Well, well! who would have thought it! I suppose then we have also an Apollonia already nam-

ed after you; she is the great patroness of the Players' Gild, and therefore of the members of our Apollo Club."

"Of course, the oldest one, our Lony!" the wife laughed again. "Surely you ought to know that, she has borne the name now for nearly eighteen years."

"My, my, but doesn't time pass, Apollonia, and all the while we are learning new things about our children. What name, then, do you suggest?"

"Don't you think we might allow the godmother to choose for us?"

"That's easily said, Apollonia. Wait at least till I have found one."

"That reminds me, John, you didn't tell me a word about what luck you had looking for a sponsor."

The scenic-painter Papperinger scratched his ear. "You know," he said, "none upon whom I called pitched me out of the house exactly. On the contrary, they were very polite in their speech; they inquired about your health, sent their best regards and wished the infant such incredible blessings that if realized, they'd crush the child body and soul, but when it came to the question of testing these congratulations, ah, then they all had valid and most varied excuses. It was the Bible story over again: the one had bought a pair of oxen, another was getting ready to move, a third wanted suitable clothes. The Leader of the Orchestra was the most decent of them all; he shook my

hand and assured me that he and his wife considered it a great honor for having been chosen to stand sponsor at the Baptism of our latest born; hence, with great pleasure would they accept the offer excepting for the fact that they are godparents to one of our twelve children already; which one it was he didn't know nor I either. He asked his wife about it and she said that they had stood for our first; her husband was Choirmaster at the time.

"I called upon the First Violinist next. He also excused himself upon the ground that he had stood for us once before, he didn't know how many years ago. I got the same answer from the second Solo Violinist and from the Bass; the Cornetist went so far as to swear that he was god-father to our twins—but God had never sent us twins! All the members of the Orchestra refused me in words very much alike. They had each of them in turn served us some time or another either at a Baptism or in Confirmation; when I began to count them all up I found that we've been obliged by twenty-five sponsors and one or two dozen more. Isn't that terrible?"

"Yes, John," the wife answered laughing, "that is simply terrible. But then, you know many of those good people have troubles enough of their own and wish to save. Moreover, quite a number of those you have mentioned have really stood for one or the other of the children. For John, for Ferdinand, for Eugene, for Elsa, for—"

The Scene Painter stopped his ears.

"That'll do, that'll do! Accordingly I continued my quest and called on the Soubrette; she is the principal attendant of the ladies on the stage; she was so moved at my request that she touched her moist eye with a point of her lace handkerchief. 'But how can I?' she said; 'the many ceremonies would be too hard on my nerves; you know I must take care of myself.' However, she gave me a note to the Baritone, who, she stated, is very fond of children and would be glad to serve as sponsor. Apollonia, I felt like Croesus with a dagger under his cloak, when ascending the stairs to the Baritone's room; I can't stand him; his jokes are unbearable. But then, anything for wife and children, I thought, as I knocked and entered. He listened to me patiently enough excepting that every now and then he interrupted me with: 'Very good, all right, Mr. Popinjay, I mean Papperinger!' This mixing of names vexed me but he didn't mind it; at last he asked me: 'Added to the already baptized ones this last one will make—' 'The twelfth,' I replied.

"When he heard this he pressed my hand and sadly remarked that if only he had known it sooner it could have been arranged; as the case stood it was too late for he had just become godfather to his twelfth godchild, a number he dare not overstep; if he did, then our infant would be his thirteenth one; this would bring ill-luck upon it for which in conscience he could not make himself responsible. 'Wherefore,' he concluded, 'Mr. Popinjay,

I mean Papperinger, you'll have to excuse me.' I felt like taking him by the collar...I'll fix him the next time 'Cinderella' is staged. I'll put a large nail in the central plank of the broken bridge and when he, the fat swelling Marshal, slides down on it on his back, he'll remain suspended, or else his showy court-dress will be ripped from top to bottom; if I don't do that let him forever hereafter call me Popinjay instead of by my right honorable name Papperinger. To his credit I must say that before leaving he put a Twenty-Crown piece in my hand toward the Christening; the money had this mollifying effect that I did not then and there twist his neck."

"At bottom he is a kind man after all," the wife added with emotion. "If all the others who have given you the cold shoulder would have pressed your hand as effectually, we would now be rich folks. Besides, if he already has twelve god-children you can hardly blame him for his refusal to stand for a thirteenth. At least he showed his good will."

"Oh, yes, he had a good will; so did the next one to whom I went," the husband replied.

"Did you still keep on trying? You are a good man, I must say."

"I think so too, Apollonia. I know my duty; I must and will get a sponsor even if I have to go to Hades to find one."

"Don't talk so, John. That's tempting God and blasphemy!"

"Ah, nonsense! God understands me and knows what I mean. I mean simply to say that for Christian Baptism sponsors are necessary. Finally I tried Court Singer William, Soloist to the king."

"What? Did you aspire so high?" his wife asked with astonishment.

"Why not? And now listen, Apollonia: Maestro William, Court Soloist, the glory of the opera, the pride of our Country, grand Vocalist by the grace of God: he has accepted!"

"Is it possible? The youngest in the family, then, is to have the most distinguished patron of all! For what day did you fix the Christening?"

Her husband coughed a couple times before answering. "He accepted, as far as possible: 'It is a pleasure, an honor,' listen to that Apollonia, 'an honor,' he said; 'for him and his wife to have been selected to stand for our child; as a man of liberal principles he appreciated the distinction doubly. Nevertheless,—'"

Mr. Papperinger paused for a moment. In a tone somewhat lower he continued: "A circumstance however, small enough in its way and which at the time I made the offer I forgot to consider, spoiled it all."

"And what was that?"

"You know, Apollonia, before accepting, the Soloist stroked his smooth handsome chin reflectively: 'That little difference in Religion will matter some, I fear,' he said; 'for as you know, my friend'—are you listening, Apollonia? he call-

ed me his friend!—‘As you know, I, and my wife are Israelites.’”

“Oh, the pity of it, John! Didn’t you think of that? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!”

“Can a person think of everything, Apollonia? Naturally I was in a terrible dilemma. I tried in every way with fine-spun phrases and flowery language, as gently as I could, to convince him that until now a son of Israel had never been god-father at a Christening in our family. He politely bowed and assented to all I said with the words: ‘I understand the case thoroughly. But,’ he added, ‘surely, dear friend, you do not expect me to give up my faith for the sake of an infant hardly eight days old?’ I answered that I could not reasonably expect that. ‘Well then,’ the vocalist concluded, ‘you can see for yourself that under the circumstances I cannot stand sponsor for your child. It is not my fault; be not offended and do not blame me for it.’ While speaking he opened his pocket-book and handed me a Ten-Mark piece for the newcomer. I got up and thanked him assuring him that no Christian could hold it against him if he refused to assist at a Christian Baptism and that such a refusal was justifiable wherever a difference in Religion existed.”

Mrs. Papperinger could not help laughing at her husband. “John,” she said, “it was an act of foolishness on your part. The Jews have no Baptism; what, then, do they know about god-fathers and godmothers?”

"Is that so? Why didn't you tell me sooner, Apollonia? No matter, I am sure it did not prejudice him against me; he seemed to be greatly amused during the whole interview. But oh, it's a pity, a miserable pity, that the Court Singer is a Jew; what a grand Baptism we would have had! 'Perhaps, after the world has made more progress,' he told me upon leaving, 'the day may come when these trivial differences between the Sects and Confessions will disappear; when that time comes, call on me again.' You see in this place I succeeded to within an inch."

"Yes, dear John, you did all you could do," the wife praised the husband.

"I am surprised at myself, Apollonia. As I was leaving the apartments of the Court Singer I fell in with the old Souffleuse who was promptress in her day at the theater; old Frances, you know, who lives on a pension. She asked me a hundred questions and as soon as she found out I was in quest of a sponsor she exclaimed! 'Mr. Pappering-er, in the name of common sense, why do you run your legs off seeking godparents when there are a number at your beck and call? Had you come to me it would have cost you only one trip and I would have put you on to the most charming godmother in the world to stand for your last born!'"

"Well, well!" the wife exclaimed, her eyes sparkling with expectancy.

"She is an old lady, the widow of a Music Dealer who never as yet has left a theatrical man in the lurch. The Souffleuse told me of three of her

own nephews whom this widow stood godmother for in Baptism; as a Chrisom-gift she placed five ducats under the pillow of each one and every Christmas she sends them a goldpiece."

"Why, that is wonderful, John!"

"That's just what I thought and therefore without further ado I asked for her address immediately. Old Frances wrote it down carefully and directed me to a small villa in the suburbs. Off I started in spite of wet feet and the snowstorm and eventually I found the villa—Oh, that I had never met that hag, that hex, that liar, that half-crazy Souffleuse! Do you know what they told me, after ringing the bell, when I asked to speak to the old lady? 'If it's not too much trouble for you go out to the public cemetery, you'll find her there; she's been lying there now for five and a half years.' It was a burly fellow who spoke these words jestingly to me thru an open window. My hope like a flash in the pan lit up and vanished into thin air! Apollonia, at that moment I couldn't tell whether the earth were convex or concave; whether I was the scenic-painter Papperinger or the gravedigger of the common cemetery. I understand it all now: Fortune has conspired against us; we have an ill-starred child in the cradle."

"Stop right there, man, don't dare to say that!" the mother cried out indignant, stretching her arms over the child protectingly. "You are sinning against your own child, your youngest and most helpless one."

"Well, how can I help it if the devil puts these thoughts into my head after having led me around by the nose all day! Still I wish to take the words back; as a Christian I believe as well as the next man that there are good spirits and that our child has a *Guardian Angel*."

"Indeed, and I think so too; in the end he will send us a godmother if we cannot find one ourselves."

"I'd be very glad if he would, but nowadays it doesn't happen anymore that the Archangel Habauc takes hold of a Daniel by the hair and carries him thru the air to the top of the holy mountain."

Suddenly there was heard on the outside a tramping and stamping and sliding of feet and a chorus of merry voices. "The school is out, the wild youngsters will be here in a minute!" the woman sighed; even then you could hear the babble of a half-dozen children's voices coming upstairs. Pell-mell they rushed into the room, some to their father, some snuggling up to their mother, one or two looking at their tiny lately arrived sister. A side door opened that minute and Lony the oldest called out: "Come out of here and get your milk!"

To which the mother added: "Yes, and be a little quick with your lunch because I want to send Joseph and Eugene and Teena somewhere."

"And me—and me!" the others cried out. "I'm going along also!" they severally cried.

All right, but first finish your lunch. When you're thru, mama will tell you what she wants you to do."

After a quarter of an hour the children came in to their mother. "Go now and visit the church up town—"

"To see the crib, the beautiful crib!" they gaily exclaimed.

"Yes, to visit the crib. Kneel down before it and after looking at it for a while, you must pray and say that mama would have come to visit the Child Jesus in the manger but she is sick abed; therefore she has sent you in her place. And then—but pay attention that nothing happens to you—each one of you will light a small candle and hold it on the bench in front of you."

Thereupon each of the children received a piece of candle cut from a common taper and a couple of matches in a box. They were bubbling over with happiness.

"But watch out that you don't set yourselves afire; if some grown person is present ask him to light the candles for you. Do not hold the light too near to you or else it will burn your hair or comforters. After that you begin to pray quietly and devoutly each one for himself, so many Our Fathers till the candles are burnt down. Then you make the Sign of the Cross and come home again."

"Yes, mama," the children eagerly promised. "But what are we to pray for to the Infant

Jesus?" the four asked nearly at one and the same time?

"You must ask the Infant Jesus to send your little sister a real good, pious godmother."

"Oh, that's fine! Yes, mama, we'll do so! And you'll see what a beautiful rich lady the little Jesus will send!"

"I am going to ask Jesus," little Eugene said, "to become sponsor Himself for little sister. The Child Jesus will be the best one of all."

"You are without doubt the most clever among my chilren," the father said deeply touched, as he laid his hand on Eugene's head. "Still, I think you are looking a little too high, my son. Nevertheless, pray as your heart tells you. The great God no doubt has many good generous godfathers and godmothers at His disposal and if only you ask Him fervently, He will send your little sister one out of the ordinary."

"In a spacious side-chapel of the old church a large crib had been put up as usual. Before it the little children of the present day kneel, with faces beaming with admiration and devotion, as their grandparents and ancestors knelt fifty and a hundred years ago. The sun shining dimly thru the large, stained-glass, gothic windows, blended its light with that of the many candles standing near and suffused with a subdued and mellow splendor the little devotional figures of the crib: Mary and Joseph, the Divine Infant in the manger, the angels, the shepherds, the sheep and the oxen. At times the little lambent tongues of the

waxen torches would so play their light around the crib, would so yield and so withdraw their glare, that it seemed the statuettes were instinct with life. Back of the stable the Mountains of Judea might be seen with the city of Bethlehem to the front and Jerusalem in the background. Above the whole scene, held by an invisible string, the Christmas angel with silvery wings was floating gracefully.

In front of the crib there were half a dozen kneeling stools, in the first four of which the little Papperinger children were praying: Joseph, Eugene, Teena and Adeline were whispering their Our Fathers while the candles they had brought with them and stuck to the benches, were silently consuming themselves.

In the last stool a lone child was kneeling, richly dressed and with his hands incased in a pair of furlined gloves. He was a boy about ten years of age, healthy, handsome, lithe and tall for his age, with refined features that proved he was well-born. His blond curly hair hung in ringlets over the fur-collar of his overcoat. Two seats back in the regular pews a middle-aged lady was sitting.

The boy with folded hands was praying fervently. His whole bearing was faultless excepting that now and then he would furtively glance at the four poor children who in their plain attire were so devout and edifying.

A slight blush of satisfaction and self-esteem mantled his face. Egon, the only son of the may-

or had reason for it. His mama had brought him to the crib that he might thank God for the happiness and honor in having been chosen to fill the most beautiful roll the following night at the Christmas celebration of the St. Elizabeth's Society; as the Angel of the Nativity it was his privilege to announce to the audience the tidings of joy of the Holy Night.

This was in accordance with a custom of long standing that the best behaved boy in the Third Latin Class should be selected for this honor. To avoid all show of partiality the members of the class did the voting themselves. This year by an almost unanimous ballot Egon was so distinguished. Therefore by way of thanksgiving and also to receive the grace to play his part well, his pious mama brought him to church at this hour, to pray before the crib.

The boy did as he was told just as he was wont to do all his duties. Nevertheless during his devotions the proud thought obtruded itself that, after all, the credit for having been chosen Christmas Angel belonged solely to him; by his diligence, by his behavior, by always ranking first in class, he merited the honor himself. Therefore it was but fair and owing to his own efforts that he was selected over and above Henry, the Notary's son; the latter is a sneak at best, uses an interlinear for his Latin and is assisted by his brother who is in the Eighth Class, in his translations; moreover, he must be a very bad boy because he was once locked up in the school

black-hole. Egon saw plainly that Henry was deeply hurt for having been defeated and he heard him say that he would get even with him. But as the mayor's son Egon was not afraid...

"To-night I'll go over my piece again, then it will be impossible for me to fall thru to-morrow. Oh, how fine it's going to be! To be dressed like a page in white silk and silver trimmings; to wear a gorgeous blue, starspangled mantle, and lastly, a pair of wonderful wings! These wings set with pinions of gold upon a background of pale red, blue and green, will shimmer under the stage-light, like frozen snow and glow like the rainbow. Vested thus, how can anyone help but look beautiful! And that one will be Egon, myself, the mayor's son!"

Thoughts like these came and went thru the boy's head, so that his innocent, childish face took on an air of self-consciousness, of pride and conceit.

The candles had burnt down; the Papperinger children made the Sign of the Cross and left. The mayor's son and his mother followed closely behind.

In a short time Egon was at home seated at the table, impatiently waiting for his lunch.

"Hurry, hurry!" he urged the old servant who was coming in with a cup of milk. "I must go to the rehearsal. What do you suppose? Shall I come late?" He pronounced the "I" with great stress as if he were the one figure in the whole entertainment.

The maid laughed. "Take yours first," she said; "the others are not so in a hurry."

A little sister and brother of Egon came up to speak with him; pushing them rudely away and snatching up his overcoat, he tipped over the chair in his haste and rushed from the house slamming the door with a noise you could hear thru the whole building.

"I'll be glad when this entertainment is over," the mayor said to his wife after a little; "Egon is completely out of his head; he is so changed you would hardly know him. The Christmas Angel has upset him. I'll cool his head thoroughly when he comes back from the rehearsal."

Inwardly the mother agreed with her husband but at the same time she pleaded that he would be considerate with the boy, at least until the entertainment was over, so that he might get thru his part without confusion. She promised that in the meantime she would gently upbraid him.

"After all, it is due to his ambition if he is not so well-behaved as he has been until now. The child is anxious to get thru with its part to-morrow night without halt or break," she pleaded.

"That may be, but at the same time there is a great deal of conceit mixed up with the wish. I do not begrudge him the honor and the pleasure—but going too far is going too far—he needs a calling down badly."

The rehearsal was a success. It was the last one and therefore in costume. Egon, the tall beautiful boy with blond curls and refined face,

lived the character he played. He was a pretty angel; it would have been difficult to find his counterpart. The dazzling silken suit, the superb mantle, the gorgeous wings of silver and gold, made a grand effect. With sparkling eyes and a beaming face Egon recited his part as if he were really the angel he impersonated. The Committee of Ladies was fascinated with the boy and his speech and petted and praised him extravagantly. Two pair of jealous eyes, however, were fixed upon him from the back of the hall. Egon's rival, Henry, and his elder brother, who with other boys, sang in the chorus of the play, sat watching him grimly.

When Henry saw the splendid costume in which Egon was dressed, his disappointment and jealousy flamed up more than ever; he tried to restrain his tears. His elder brother was fiercely agitated. He saw with what self-possession and happy deliberation Egon spoke out the Christmas message; clenching his fists he muttered: "Proud fool, take care! There are others in the play besides the mayor's boy!"

"The rehearsal is over," the old pensioned teacher who had the play in charge, announced; "only the singers are to remain; we have to go thru the choruses once more."

While the smaller children and Egon and those not in the choir were leaving, the singers came up and crowded around the large stove, for it was quite cold in the back of the hall.

"Watch out," a comrade said to Henry, "you're getting too near the stove!"

There was danger for anyone who approached too closely, for its sides were red hot.

Henry's brother looked at the stove. Instantly a shadow crossed his sullen face. He looked around the hall. The costumes of the players and other paraphernalia of the entertainment were lying about on tables in picturesque disorder. Egon's blue mantle was hanging on the wall. The wonderful angel-wings were on the back of a chair close by. The searching eyes of the jealous singer took in the circumstance at once. Passing leisurely round and round the outer circle of the boys who were standing near the stove, he deftly brought the chair closer and closer unnoticed.

At the moment when the teacher called out: "All the boys up to the stage!" he quickly gave the chair another shove which brought it so near to the stove that the tips of the wings touched the glowing iron. The Melodion began to play and the choir sang out. The first chorus was perfect.

"Now let us take up 'Glory be to God,' the director said, lifting his baton; he hesitated a moment.

"What smell is that?" he asked. "Don't you notice anything? As if something were burning! Did one of you get too near the stove? I hope none of you will catch fire to-morrow night!"

The singers laughed and looked at one another; suddenly one of them exclaimed: "For heaven's sake—there!" pointing to the stove.

That very minute Egon's magnificent angel-wings on the chair by the stove were full ablaze; an offensive smoke filled the hall. The teacher rushed to the place, upset the chair and threw the burning wings on the floor. A bucket of water was brought immediately and poured upon the fetid, sticky mass; with some trouble and much stamping the fire was put out.

There was nothing left of the gorgeous wings excepting a pile of ashes, some half-burnt bits of cloth and a heap of wire.

The singers looked at the ruin of the wonderful wings with pity and regret. "That puts an end to the Christmas entertainment," one of the boys said. "Not at all, but Egon will have to speak his part without wings; he has a splendid mantle still," a second answered. The teacher simply remarked that it was well it happened while they were still in the hall; only for that a terrible fire might have been the consequence. Upon his asking how it had happened none could give any information. Several of the boys had noticed that the chair was near the stove but that was all.

"Yes, and Egon should have had sense enough to put the wings in a safer place," a singer observed.

To this another boy replied: "Surely he could not buckle and unbuckle the wings himself; one of the Committee Ladies is responsible."

Some stated they were certain the chair was not so near the stove at first, but who it was that moved it they could not tell.

The chorus was taken up again; it was correctly sung but the happy and joyous spirit that should have pervaded it was gone. After this the boys left the hall. They failed to notice the satisfied look in the face of the older brother and the shy behavior of Henry the younger. The Ladies of the Committee were in great distress and quite unhappy when they heard of the accident and saw the results.

"Our misfortune in the loss of the beautiful artistic wings," the Lady Chairman remarked, "was nevertheless outweighed by our good fortune. The whole hall might easily have gone up in the blaze."

Yes, indeed, the misfortune was attended with a blessing by far greater than any of the ladies surmised.

They were thru with supper at the mayor's when one of the Committee called at the residence to speak to the Lady Mayoress. When the party had gone, the wife said to her husband: "They had an accident in the hall and narrowly escaped even a greater one; to some extent it concerns Egon." She related what had just been told her.

The boy was all eyes and ears. His face turned fiery red and then almost white as a sheet when he heard that his Christmas-wings were destroyed. With a hoarse voice and a forced smile he said: "Ah, mama, you wish only to try me!"

The mother was frightened when she observed the terrible agitation depicted in the distorted

features of her son who at other times was so cool and sensible.

She denied her child's statement by merely shaking her head. "Don't be a baby, Egon," she stammered; she could say no more.

"No, no, it isn't true, it cannot be so!" he screamed, leaping up from his place in anguish. "I don't believe it! None of the other children in the play had anything of theirs spoiled—only mine—only mine—I alone will be kept out of the entertainment!"

"Egon," the father advised, "calm yourself, what does such tinsel amount to, after all?"

"No—no—never—my beautiful wings are gone—all is gone—I don't want to hear anything!"

The boy wept, shouted and screamed but not so much from sorrow as from anger. Then in a very frenzy he fell on the floor and rolled about and stamped his feet and clapped his hands howling with boyish rage. At this sight and noise the younger children also began to cry.

His father instantly seized and lifted him up and shook him till the boy could neither hear nor see. "Egon," he commanded, "sit down immediately, and don't you dare to give out another yell, I'll settle with you by and by!" The boy obeyed. The father never before had witnessed such a display of passion in his child.

In forcible language he lectured the son about his despicable conduct and then abruptly sent him to bed; by his pillow sat his mother, and for a long time that night she tried and at last

succeeded in convincing Egon how silly and wickedly he had acted.

In a quiet tone she said: "I see now that in the part you were to play in this sacred Christmas festival, you have thought of nothing but yourself, of the grand rôle assigned to you, of the praise you would receive from your school-companions and the people; in the beautiful costume you were to figure and the angel-wings, you saw only yourself, and in that which you were to say, you meant simply to praise yourself, thinking all the while that you were the chief personage in the entertainment, the whole play itself. Certainly it is an honor to have been chosen to represent an angel of God; but pride got into your head, and presumption took possession of you so that from the very day of your election you have not been the same good, sensible Egon. The beautiful part of an angel which you were to assume instead of raising you up and making you better, made you worse in your behavior, in your prayer, in every way. And to crown it all, such a contemptible exhibition of passion to-day! Child, to the depth of my heart I am ashamed of you. I thought that I was the mother of a good, pious, manly boy—and all at once I am disillusioned and by such a scene! Egon, you have hurt me, you have frightened me; you have painfully surprised me in a way I had never expected and least of all at Christmas."

The boy was silent as death while his mother spoke; he was weeping now. The mother continu-

ed earnestly and ardently: "The burning of the beautiful wings must surely have grieved you; but, Egon, I know now that it was not undeserved."

"But, mother, if another fellow destroyed them a purpose?" the boy cried.

"Then God permitted it," she replied. "Just ask yourself if it was becoming such a sacred play to be vain and proud and to think the festival had been gotten up for you and not for the honor of the Infant Savior. Therefore that which has happened had to happen and the good God out of pity for you found it necessary to humble your pride. Rather than to become enraged and to act like a wild beast, you should have asked the Child Jesus to forgive you and have promised that you would be more careful and grateful in future. It is not too late to do so yet; unless you are sorry you cannot approach the crib with a good conscience."

"I see it now, dear mama, I am sorry and awfully ashamed... Yes, I have deserved it," the child heartily avowed weeping bitterly.

The ice was broken; during the next quarter of an hour an eavesdropper might have heard mother and child conjointly praying to God for pardon, and Egon promising to make it all right in the morning by a good Confession and henceforth to try to be more humble and less vain-glorious in his work.

* * *

Early the next morning the Ladies' Committee met to advise about procuring a new pair of

wings for the Christmas-Angel. A decision was soon reached. In the Property-Room of the Court Theatre many pairs no doubt, were kept in stock; it was agreed to call upon the Costumer and rent the most beautiful on hand. The mayoress volunteered to attend to the matter herself. She was acquainted with the Director of the Court-Orchestra. He, however, could do nothing except to direct her to the Mistress of Robes who, he said, would procure her all that was requisite for the entertainment; this unfortunately was not the case. She begged the Lady Mayoress to ask the Head Costumer for a permit; as soon as this was obtained she would pick her the finest wings, the very ones used in Gretchen's apotheosis as depicted in Gounod's Opera of Faust.

Accordingly she called upon the Manager of Costumes. That gentleman said he would be only too willing to oblige his esteemed petitioner except for the fact that in view of the many losses the theatre had lately sustained from private renters of property, in the way of unpaid bills, of garments torn, mutilated and lost, a strict law had been made three months ago, that henceforth no theatrical goods should be loaned for any purpose to private parties. "It gives me infinite pain," he said, "to be so tightly bound by this regulation that I cannot help you much as I would like, but," he added, when he saw the look of disappointment in the face of the mayoress, "if you will ask the Superintendent

of the theatre, he with a single word can dispense me from the law in your case and then I will most gladly do for you what I can,"—and so forth.

To the great Chief, the Czar of the theatrical domain she went. She had to wait a while, for there were two ladies ahead of her in the waiting room and one in the office. The office-door opened at last and a woman dressed in the very latest style came out and joined the other two. "Refused," the mayoress heard her say to her companions; "he has refused me so curtly I feel as if I had been flogged; he did not even offer me a chair."

Now it was the turn of the Lady Mayoress to enter. The Superintendent led her to a sofa and managed to rid his face of a few creases which his difficult official position had placed there; however, as soon as she had opened her mouth about the wings, the official creases returned. He replied that greatly as he would like to oblige her he could not do so in this instance. The authorities of the Court Theatre had strictly forbidden that in future any costume, wig, or play-requisite of whatever description should be loaned; this rule was to be made binding upon every petitioner without exception. To his inexpressible regret he could do nothing for her; there is but one way left.

"Please, Sir, what is that?" she asked. Pity for her son Egon who had acknowledged and was sorry for his pride, urged her to do her utmost.

"See His Majesty," was the answer.

The Lady Mayoress smiled. "I thank you, Sir; I will not do that; His Majesty who is so gracious to all his subjects can hardly be expected to interest himself in a pair of wings even tho they are angel-wings."

It was eleven o'clock when she left the theatre. In the vaulted vestibule she met old Frances, the one-time Lady Prompter at the Court Theatre, now retired and living on a pension.

"Well, well, it's astonishing to see you here, Lady Mayoress," the old woman who had received many a favor from the latter, remarked. "Have you applied for the part of the 'African Princess?'"

The lady smiled and shook her head.

"Or was it some other wish that brought you here?" the Souffleuse continued. "Remember, that tho retired, I have some influence yet with the officials; can I be of any service to you?"

"Frances, you cannot," the mayoress replied, her voice betraying her disappointment.

"In the theatre nothing is impossible and everything is possible; heaven and earth meet upon the stage. Trust me, I have done many a friend a service."

"If it will do no good, neither can it do harm," the mayoress said to herself;—then she told Frances all about the Christmas entertainment fixed for that very night and of the wings her son Egon representing the angel was to wear; that these wings were destroyed and that she

was vainly seeking another pair. "Now then, Frances, what can you do to help me?"

"But, Lady Mayoress, what in the world has induced you to run your legs off, when by calling on me it would have cost you only the one trip and I would have put you on to getting the most splendid pair in the world?"

It was in almost the same words she had addressed poor Papperinger the day before when she directed him to a woman who had been dead five and a half years, as an available godmother.

Just as did the scene-painter, the mayoress asked: "Is that true? To whom would you have directed me? No doubt you can still give me the address of that person?"

"Of course, of course, only you must pay a little money. You know, no one will rent you wings for nothing, and if you don't mind a couple of dollars I'll take you to a man who will furnish you a pair."

"Take me to him right away!"—The lady took the woman by the arm and started off. "But tell me is it possible to have the wings ready by to-night?"

"You don't know Papperinger, scenic-painter and Theatre-Decorator! He talks like a child sometimes and is rather forgetful. But in whatever pertains to his art he has no equal; you'll be pleased with him!"

"Let us hurry, then, Frances; it will be worth your while, if what you say is true!"

And true it was.

When the two women entered the room of the artist Papperinger,—Frances in advance with the mayoress behind,—the painter looked anything but obliging. That Frances, who had so grievously deceived him only yesterday should have the effrontery to enter his house uninvited, filled him with just indignation: “Such audacity—such brazen-facedness—that beats anything in Shakespeare! Her gall would overflow the Heidelberger Tun! She has lost not only her memory and understanding but also her conscience!” With these words and others like them he greeted the women, while with his right hand he was gesticulating with a brush from which red paint was dripping to the floor.

“You would like to know perhaps how I fared yesterday? You are facing the right one then!” He approached the Souffleuse and his brush was playing in dangerous proximity around her nose. “Do you think you’ll send me upon another fool’s errand? Or is that lady behind you the woman brought back from the grave, to whom you directed me? Let me tell you, Frances, if I had such a wretched memory as you, and a brain-box so rattled as yours, I would cease giving people advice, do you understand?”

Old Frances replied: “Mr. Papperinger, are you rehearsing for a comedy or have you lost your equilibrium because you are the fortunate father of another child? I have reason to presume that you are soberest in the morning! As to loss of memory, I can instance a Theatre Dec-

orator who doesn't know his own children apart, calls Teena, Julia, and Eugene, Joseph, and vice versa; who asked the Court Singer William to stand for his child, altho he knew the man was a Jew and of the tribe of Benjamin! Moreover, in quoting Shakespeare to me, bear in mind that you are addressing your superior who to the satisfaction of His Majesty has been Promptress in the Court Theatre for forty years and who altho retired upon a well-deserved pension, has the words of the bard still fresh in her mind. Take Romeo and Juliet!"

The old Souffleuse began declaiming:
" 'What say you? Can you love the gentleman?
This night you shall behold him at our feast:
Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen.
Examine every lineament
And see how one another lends content'—
no allusion to you, Mr. Papperinger."

The man had stopped his ears. As soon as he noticed that the wide mouth of Frances had closed he spoke again: "She wishes to accuse me of a poor memory, and yesterday—she—she sent me to call on a woman who has been dead and buried for more than five years!"

"W-h-a-t?" she asked indignantly.

"It's true; do you know what answer I got when I asked to see and speak to the widow of the Music Dealer? 'Go out to the cemetery, you'll find her there; she's been lying there for five and a half years!'"

"Mr. Papperinger, examine your memory; I'll bet you called at the wrong house!"

"It is the villa, No. 97, in the suburbs," he explained exasperated; "I asked for the widow of the Music Dealer, the M-u-s-i-c Dealer, do you understand, Mrs. Souffleuse once upon a time?"

Suddenly calmed, Frances simply replied: "This is another instance how quickly time passes. But, Mr. Papperinger, look at your young ones! Isn't it disgraceful?"

It was at least comical if not worse; for while the father was talking the two little girls Teena and Bertha had cuddled close to him so that their little jackets were soiled with the dripping paint.

"The pity of it!"

"It's only water color; in two minutes it's dry and gone," he replied.

Frances began wiping the faces and cleaning the clothes of the children with her handkerchief talking all the time. "If a person has a heart in his body he can't see a careless and slovenly man run about helplessly. But what reward did I get for offering assistance? Nothing but ingratitude. Is it my fault if you called at the wrong villa? Or could I help it that the Music Dealer's widow died five years ago? Surely I meant it well. I gave you the best advice possible in your distress. Hereafter do as you please and publish it to the seven quarters of the globe that you are looking for a godmother for your twelfth child."

At first the mayoress listened with astonishment to the explanatory dialogue, but by and by with interest and amusement. Stepping up at last she kindly inquired: "I understand, Mr. Papperinger, that you are wanting a sponsor for your newly-born?"

"That's true, alas!" Without another word he jumped to the conclusion that the Lady Mayoress had condescended to honor his family by becoming godmother for his infant child. His presumption in this case was correct. Like a dreary sky at the rising of the sun was his poor face transfigured when he saw the lady approaching the bed where his wife and child lay and after congratulating the mother, offer to be the infant's sponsor at the Christening.

As a matter of course, the Christmas-Wings were begun and finished that day for Egon; the artist did that with ease and pleasure. He made them more beautiful than the pair that was destroyed, and Egon, the humbled boy, shone more brilliantly and spoke his part that night better than ever.

After the Baptism, old Frances rebuked Mr. Papperinger more than once with the question: "Now then, ungrateful man, who was it that procured for you so distinguished a godmother? None other but the old Souffleuse 'on the shelf' as you are want to nickname her."

The newly christened child slumbered and smiled in its sleep, its tiny head buried in soft pillows. Was it dreaming, perhaps, of the "angel-wings?"

The Poorest Child of All

Out in the diaspora, that is, in a town and district which was Protestant by ninety per cent, a few scattered Catholic families from the middle and poorer classes dwelt, who had wandered thither years ago in quest of a livelihood. These families no matter from where they came or how they might differ from one another in fortune, in social position, in political views, were solidly united in one respect. With heart and soul they clung to the priest whom the bishop had recently given them and to their modest temporary chapel which they had furnished and decorated as well as they could. On Sundays at Mass and occasionally when Vesper Services were held the little church was always filled, and then every one even the poorest, contributed his mite to the collection-box.

It was the last Sunday in Advent, a few days before Christmas. This day was fixed upon for the distribution of Christmas-gifts among the poorest children of the scattered parish; no doubt, it was rather early to do so but it could not be helped; the hall of "The Crown" had been spoken for by other parties for all the Sundays and holydays after Christmas. "It's just as well now as later," the old man in charge of the

town-granary remarked. How correct he was the sequel will show.

Hours ahead of time, the young boys and girls were standing restlessly in front of "The Crown" eagerly waiting for its doors to open. Old Christina who had charge of sweeping the chapel and the school and keeping them in order, stood on the outside of the hall as guard to keep the uninvited from entering either before or at the time the festivities would begin.

In the small rectory the young mission priest was busy at his desk getting things in order. Carefully he laid to one side the outline of an address he was to deliver in the hall; on top of it he put an excerpt from a beautiful story he had read in a magazine; and lastly, upon the manuscripts he placed a heavy letter that was richly ornamented with a coat of arms. Within the envelope was a double gold-crown and a Ten-Mark piece—thirty marks in all.

"I have still time to answer the letter to express my thanks," he said while reaching for a sheet of writing paper; just then his sister stepped in.

"The Overseer of the Poor-House kindly asks would you come out to attend a woman who is very sick." The words had not at all a sympathetic ring. "Surely there was time enough earlier in the day for him to have sent for you!"

"What can we do about it, Theresa," the brother replied getting up. Taking the Holy Oils with

him he started for the Poor-House which was situated far beyond the outskirts of the town.

The afternoon was dark and sullen, the sky dull and monotonous, the streets and houses were covered with soft, wet snow; the blowing, tempered west wind was promising rain rather than snow. Night was setting in early and an occasional light was already visible in the houses along the road.

The Overseer met the priest upon his arrival at the Poor-House, and begged him to step into his office a minute before ministering to the woman.

"It is a sorry story," he began; "old as I am I have never in all my life come across the like. Yesterday two men of the town who were cutting Christmas Trees came upon a helpless woman with a child in the woods; she was apparently dead. Indeed, they took her for dead when they brought her here; however, after a time in a warm bed and with the help of a restorative, she came to. The doctor said she had been frozen almost to death and that she could survive the exposure only a day or two at the most.

"As soon as she was conscious I asked her who she was and whence she came. In answer she simply stared at me and mumbled some unintelligible words. I talked and questioned and scolded and threatened, but all to no purpose. Finally she spoke out loud but in a language I could not understand. The deaconess searched her clothes

to see if there was any letter or sign by which to identify her—nothing of the kind was found.

“From her dress, ragged as it is and from her face, it is evident that she is a stranger to this neighborhood and to the country. The lutheran dean was here yesterday and tried to find out if she were an Evangelical; it was of no use. My assistant spoke to her in English, in French, and in a couple other languages besides,—she answered, sighed, sobbed, but not a word could he or I make out. ‘The tongue she speaks,’ my helper said, ‘is a strange one to me.’ ‘Perhaps she is simply raving,’ I suggested. ‘Even so,’ he replied, ‘I ought to be able to catch a word now and then.’

“Maybe she’s a gypsy or an Italian. I am concerned about her faith; no one, however, knows to what Church she belongs. My assistant asked me to call for you, possibly you might be able to get something out of her. It would be a great blessing, for she is far gone. Otherwise, if she dies so, I’ll know neither who her relatives are nor where to find them, nor whom to charge for her burial. Therefore I have sent for you, Your Reverence,” the Overseer concluded. “I hope you’ll have better luck with her than we had.”

They left the room together to visit the sick woman. She was lying in a low small room the walls of which were bare, the windows without curtains, the sashes filled out with wooden and glass panes, the floor of rough boards and almost

worn thru. In the middle of the room there was a stove, and in one corner a rickety bed, upon which under a woolen blanket, with all her tattered clothes still on her, the unfortunate stranger lay mortally sick from chills and fever.

Her glaring eyes betrayed fear and excitement, and every now and then unconsciously she pressed to her bosom a little bundle of rags, enveloped in which an infant was sleeping soundly.

Before the priest had addressed her she began to talk excitedly in her delirium; there was one expression, it sounded like a petition, which she repeated time and again, and after each repetition she invariably kissed her child on its forehead. It was impossible, however, from all her ranting to understand a single word or from it to infer of what nationality she was.

"Perhaps she speaks Czechic, Slavic or Bohemian, Russian, Croatian or Polish?"

The sick woman had ceased talking; she was lying on the bolster exhausted and breathing hard. With dilated eyes she was gazing at the priest; you could see depicted in them anxiety, anguish and an intense longing.

The priest made the Sign of the Cross upon her brow to let her know that he was Catholic. A torrent of words followed with so marked an emphasis and gesture that he concluded she was saying a prayer.

Thereupon he took a Rosary from his pocket and showed it to her. Instantly she withdrew her hand from under the cover and with her skeleton

fingers tried to seize it. In fact, before the priest realized it she had the Rosary in her grasp; she kissed it many times and then made an effort to slip it over the head of the infant beside her.

“Thanks be to God! I know now that she is a Catholic,” he exclaimed. Taking from his Breviary a picture of the Crucifixion, he held it up before her and then struck his breast three times as a mute exhortation that she should make an act of Contrition. She did so immediately, whereupon he gave her conditional Absolution and Extreme Unction. He left the room at once, for the woman was in her extremity and hastened to the chapel to fetch the Holy Viaticum. After a lapse of twenty minutes he was back. It was too late, however; the woman in the meantime had passed to eternity.

Waxen, hollow-cheeked, with strands of her dark hair in disorderly confusion encircling her face, she lay stiff and stark upon the bed.

“My wife has taken the infant over to her room,” the Overseer said; “I couldn’t leave it with the dead mother. It was almost impossible, however, to release the child from her arms, she held it so tightly.”

In an undertone he added: “Surely it would have been better if she had taken the baby with her. What am I to do with it? I know nothing about its mother and am therefore at a loss to know to whom to send it. As the child of a stranger, the waif will be most ungraciously received by the town.”

The priest nodded reflectively. "Is there neither word nor script to tell who the mother is or where she came from?" he asked.

"We know absolutely nothing. About eight or ten days ago there were strangers passing thru the neighborhood; they might have been Polish field-laborers or gypsies or such trash. Six miles from yonder boundary line is the international highway along which vagrants and others are continually traveling. Probably she could not keep up with a group of her countrymen and was left behind; or maybe she went strolling aside of her own accord and bent upon begging or stealing, took a byway thru the woods and was lost and almost frozen to death. Whatever theory is correct we have the corpse and the waif on our hands."

"Thank God," the priest said to himself, "at least she has had a Christian end."

"To-day is Sunday," he said to the Overseer, "I'll bury her on Tuesday."

The latter bruskly replied: "Bury her—this body here? In our cemetery? But who'll stand the expense? Not the town, I can tell you that right now. We have had cases like this before; 'twas only last year a young peasant was found frozen. Excepting in summer, we always send these bodies to the College of Anatomy in Tübingen. My neighbor over there has the hauling contract; he'll take this away to-morrow."

"Overseer, we may be able to make some other arrangements; I'll let you know by to-night."

The priest knelt down and prayed awhile for the deceased. Her life-struggle was over; but what about the orphan left behind? Was it not indeed in the whole world, the poorest child of all? What would become of it?

Hurrying home he quickly made his way to the hall, not because he was still in the mood to enjoy the festival but because as director of it he must be there and had already delayed it too long.

* * *

The hall of "The Crown" was full to overflowing. All the members large and small of the mission parish were present; quite a number of Protestants also, relatives of the Catholic parishioners, fathers and mothers-in-law, grandparents and cousins. A long table at one end of the large room was groaning under the weight of an immense Christmas Tree laden with gifts. The festival opened with a grand chorus sung by young and old standing in a half circle around the tree and the beautiful crib at its base. Then the priest gave an address. The young folks came next with recitations and solos and instrumental selections on the zither, the violin and piano. When all the numbers on the program had been rendered, the gifts on hand were distributed to the poor children and they were dismissed.

After a little while the Rev. Pastor got up and said: "Our school-children did well to-day. They recited and sang beautifully and therefore in the first place it is our duty to thank the teacher. In

the second place, as my part on the program I will read something, not in poetry, however, for I am not a poet, but in simple prose. The piece I have in view I found in a religious magazine the other day."

He read: "The best Christmas Sermon of All. The following interesting and edifying story is taken from the middle of the last century. Father Jerome, from the Venetian Province, was commanded on Christmas Eve to preach a sermon that very night in the grand Basilica of St. Mark. This good Religious who was quite advanced in age at the time, was highly regarded in Venice where he was born and where he had lived without interruption the past twenty years. Altho zealous in his quest for souls and experienced in the science of the Saints he was poorly versed in secular knowledge. It was his special pleasure to speak to children and to the poor working people. Everybody knew him. He would go into the shops and out into the fields and speak familiarly to the laborers. With predilection, however, it was the indigent sick he sought out in their huts in order to console and assist them. The command of his Superior that he should preach that night in the famous Cathedral before a select audience, saddened him accordingly; he was accustomed to address the rough sailors only and the ignorant poor, and knew and cared nothing about the polish and refinements of language. 'My God, put suitable words upon my tongue,' he prayed, 'or else I will bring disgrace upon my Order.' With a

heavy heart the humble servant of God left his cloister just as the sun was setting in the west.

“Before going to St. Mark’s he would attend a very sick woman who had called for him. He entered the hovel. Upon a wretched bed he found a dying mother and in a cradle near-by her child asleep. Touched with pity at the misery in evidence all around, he spoke words of comfort as well as he could to the woman who at the sound of his reassuring voice shook off for the moment the lethargy of death that had seized her. ‘I am dying,’ she whispered, ‘and am obliged to leave my child behind an unprotected orphan. No doubt, God has sent you whom the whole city reveres as a saint, not only to assist me in my last hour but also to care for my child.’

“‘Calm yourself, my good woman,’ the Religious replied, ‘and remember that He the Creator of all things who feeds the fledglings of the sparrow will also provide for your infant. Depart in peace therefore, dear sister, to celebrate Christmas in heaven with the angels.’ The joy which these words gave her, snapped the last bond which still held her to the earth and she passed peacefully away assisted by the prayers of this worthy son of St. Francis.

“In an incredibly short time the news had spread that Father Jerome was to preach in the Cathedral this Christmas Eve. The church therefore was crowded because everyone loved him and was anxious to hear him. When the hour for the sermon had come and he did not appear many

feared a disappointment; it was known that he had never preached from the pulpit of St. Mark. Their fear was changed to surprise however, when soon afterward they saw the venerable Religious arrive carrying a bundle under his scapular, namely, an infant in swaddling clothes. He placed the child gently in the crib upon the straw where it lay peacefully slumbering with a smile on its face. It seemed as if the living Infant Jesus was lying there. For a long while Father Jerome knelt in prayer, then he got up and addressed the people:

“ ‘My dearly beloved brethren! I am a poor, illiterate man. The very thought of preaching to so learned an audience who know so many things of which I am ignorant, fills me with dread. But the good God has come to my assistance. By divine dispensation it has happened that just before the sermon I came across a woman on her deathbed, whose deepest and only concern in dying was this that she must leave behind her an infant unprovided for. She died half an hour ago, entrusting her child to God’s Providence. My heart was moved when I saw the helpless babe, for it reminded me of the Infant Jesus refused a shelter by men, lying cold and unbefriended in a manger at Bethlehem. A voice spoke within me: ‘Father Jerome, bring the little orphan to the church where you are to preach to-night. Tell the faithful that I for their sakes was wrapped in coarse bandages and left to shiver and hunger. Tell them they have everything in abundance, food,

clothing, lodging and mothers to love and care for them. Will they forever refuse me sympathy and permit me to lie upon the comfortless straw?"

"Christian souls who are listening to me, behold in this orphan the Divine Child pleading for your love and care. If you refuse to receive it, it will die." The eyes of many were brimming with tears at the words, and the scene they beheld; nothing like it had ever before been witnessed in that church. Among the many mothers present that night not one but was willing to receive the infant into her home. 'Now do I understand,' said Father Jerome, 'why it was God inspired my Superior to command me to preach in the Basilica Christmas Eve."

The young priest of the mission when he had read the story, laid the paper aside and addressed his people: "At the time I came across this and made up my mind to read it to you, my purpose was simply to show you by contrast the many blessings God has bestowed on the children of the parish during the past year and also by citing this beautiful example to give to this entertainment a religious tone and character. To-day, however, another reason has been added to give the story I have just read a present and direct application to all here assembled, a reason, which until a few hours ago I had never suspected and which cannot but effect and move you Catholic mothers to instant action. First of all, then, allow me to relate my experiences just before I came to this hall to assist at the Christmas Tree celebration."

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The pastor told about the poor woman and her child in the Poor-House. In breathless silence the congregation listened to him.

“Such poverty, such destitution, I had never believed possible,” he stated; “I never thought that I would see such misery. And yet if what I have told you has aroused in you but a fruitless sympathy of what use was the story? The pity that you feel must show itself in deeds in a twofold way. First of all, the orphan child of the unknown stranger must be provided for. We must find a mother who will love and care for it; who with the help of God will bring it up to become a good, pious Christian. Where she will be found and who she will be, we cannot determine at once; but I am confident that our Savior in view of His own destitute childhood will find the little orphan at the Poor-House a mother and a home. We will have done our duty for the meantime if a family of the parish will volunteer to accept and care for the child until other provision can be made. No doubt it is neither an honor nor a pleasure to take into a family a waif concerning which absolutely nothing is known. Nevertheless the mother whose charity is so generous as to receive it, can comfort herself with the words: ‘The Infant Jesus and Its blessed Mother have brought the little stranger to my house and placed it in my cradle; for love of them it is welcome.’ ”

The Rev. Pastor paused awhile.

His words had fallen upon responsive hearts. After a short deliberation among the audience several women came up, each of them willing to receive the child until other arrangements could be made. That very night accordingly the motherless orphan was taken out of the Poor-House to a Catholic home.

“Now then, there is a second point,” the priest continued, “which for its solution cannot depend upon one generous mother only or a single family but must be the concern of every adult in the parish. The question is this: What are we to do in regard to the deceased mother whose child for the present has been provided for?

“It is true she is a total stranger to us, an alien to our country and we are therefore under no obligation to her. For the reason that she died without a penny, poor as a beggar, she cannot be buried in the town-cemetery. To-morrow her remains are to be given over to the College of Anatomy in Tübingen; you as well as I know for what purpose. Of course there is nothing wrong in bringing a corpse to the dissecting room. But all the same, my soul is troubled with the thought that it will be a long time before her mutilated body will find its last resting place. She was a stranger but nevertheless one of our own faith; it was God who directed her into our midst that she might die a Catholic. To our very door the poor forsaken woman, mortally sick, came and knocked during this holy Christmas time. For her child she begged shelter, for herself a lodging—a lodging for the last time.

"Will we bid her be gone and suffer her body to be dismembered and to be laid in an unknown grave? Does not our Religion urge us to procure her Christian burial, to give her a little nook in our graveyard where her remains may rest in peace during the blessed Christmas-season and ever after? Why permit the body of the wretched, footsore, exhausted stranger to seek a domicile elsewhere in the potter's field? Grant her the scant hospitality she begs for. In the morgue of the Poor-House she lies pleading and praying: 'Bid not my remains to travel farther, let them rest with you in peace!'"

The silence of death prevailed. The pathetic words of the priest had touched the hearts of all. The eyes of many were glistening with tears. He put the question to his people: "Shall we permit the body of the stranger to be delivered to the Medical College or will we give it Christian burial? It is merely a matter of money. The City-Council will not make an exception in her case, it is solely up to us. The deceased was a Catholic, therefore it is a concern of our Catholic parish. It seems to me we can easily afford..."

The priest was interrupted at this moment.

"Your Reverence, Your Reverence!"

He looked in the direction whence the call came.

An elderly man at a closely-packed table had gotten up to speak. It was the gravedigger.

"If you have anything to say, please speak out!" said the priest somewhat surprised.

"I am a Lutheran," the gravedigger replied. "At the invitation of my brother-in-law and my sister I came here. All I wish to say is this, that poor as I am—it would not be Christian to ask for pay in such a case... I'll dig the grave for nothing."

The thin wiry man sat down.

"May God bless you!" said the priest; he walked over to the good man and shook his hand. "Good for you, that's fine!" the people in every part of the hall exclaimed.

The pastor continued: "The matter is not yet finished. What shall be done with the woman deceased?"

"Bury her here—in our churchyard!" the audience responded with one accord.

"I thank you in God's name. It is therefore understood that each one of you will contribute something toward the funeral expenses. My services as a matter of course will be given free. But I would also like if the poor and the moneyless would contribute their mite. Now do not be frightened; I will not go around with the collection-box; there is another way. Just as in past years so this Christmas likewise, a lady of the nobility whose name is not to be published, has sent our parish a gift of thirty marks. This money belongs to all of you. Ordinarily we would use it in helping acute cases of distress which chance to come up in the course of the year. You can make a gift of it if you choose to do so to the dead stranger; it will about cover the cost of her

burial. Is the parish willing that I devote the money to that purpose?"

"Yes, yes, willing!" all answered.

"You share without exception, then, in this work of mercy; God bless you! I'll send word accordingly to the Overseer to-night. Day after tomorrow, Christmas Eve, we will have the funeral at the church. Since all of you have begun this good work, as many among you as possible no doubt will be present at its finish. I will thank the noble lady to-day for her Christmas-gift and inform her how it has been spent; she will be pleased, I am sure, with your sacrifice. And the deceased who is now a member of our parish will remember in heaven what we have done for her and her child."

On the afternoon of the day before Christmas the poor woman was buried. The bells tolled, the school-children sang the *De Profundis*, the parishioners followed the priest in procession to the grave. When the coffin was lowered and sprinkled with Holy Water the Rev. Pastor made a little address to the large assembly. Not only Catholics were present but Protestants also; the latter were attracted by the unusual circumstances attending the death and burial of the stranger. In blessed ground the poor deceased alien was therefore laid to rest to await the Resurrection. Her name, her parentage, her country, her whole history to this day, remains an unsolved riddle.

* * *

It was on the morning of the Vigil of Christmas. "I would not care if the Mail did not arrive to-day," said the Countess Irene at breakfast while pouring out a cup of coffee for her consort. "I will hardly have my gifts ready for distribution. And yet I thought I had begun to prepare long enough in advance—but alas! time knows no master."

"See there, on the tray is an early evidence that your wish has been gratified!" the count remarked laughing, just as the servant entered with a stack of letters.

"Oh my! Will you please help me to look them over?"

"With pleasure. There is nothing in them after all excepting thanks and acknowledgments and Christmas wishes."

The letters were gone thru in a hurry and the thanks and good wishes they contained were read aloud or passed over in silence.

Finally a bulky, official looking envelope came to view. The countess took it up and opened it.

"Listen to this, Leopold!" she said: "The Dedication is fixed for Saturday, the 28th of this month, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, who in the Charter are designated as associate patrons of the institution. It will be a quiet celebration but solemn, in which we have reason to believe, most of the Charter Members and benefactors will take part. The Rt. Rev. Bishop will send a delegate, the State will be represented by the officials of the district. The first invitation by right

we address to Your Excellencies as the principal benefactors of the institution now completed and ready for the housing and education of destitute Catholic children. We the Committee feel it an honor and a sacred duty of gratitude, herewith most humbly and cordially to invite you to honor the occasion by your distinguished presence. Your appearance at the celebration will be its crown and glory."

"That properly concerns you alone," the count said to his spouse. "If I attend it will be only from courtesy and on account of you. What do I know about Child-Refuges and Rescue-Institutions, I would like to know?"

"You will not be obliged to make a speech upon the subject," she replied, "but insofar as you have contributed several thousands to the cause, you come within the adage: Hang principal and accomplice with the one rope."

"Listen again: As a mark of gratitude in recognition of the zealous, munificent, princely participation of Your Excellencies in the foundation of this asylum, we the Committee have unanimously agreed to accept and to keep absolutely free of charge the first child for which admission is asked and this during the whole time of its stay at the institution. Furthermore, we have resolved to do this in order thereby to honor God and His Blessed Mother for the help they have vouchsafed us, and to implore the protection of heaven for the future. In connection with this resolution the Committee and the Venerable

Sisters who will have charge of the asylum, venture to suggest, that it would be proper for the count and the countess to choose a name for the first waif to be received, because the free berth and living to which it will be entitled is founded in your honor and in your name.

“It would be an added pleasure to all concerned if Your Excellencies would select a poor child and name it coincident with the Dedication, so that the first beneficiary of your generosity might be admitted to the free berth on the opening day itself.”

“The suggestion is most beautiful!” the countess exclaimed. “Leopold, will we drive over Saturday?”

“Most assuredly, otherwise the celebration would be wanting its crown and glory, Irene,” he laughed. “And we will take the children along also. But where is the little foundling to come from which the Committee begs us to have on hand, to name and to place in the Christmas-crib? or the little waif?”

“Yes, we must find a very poor child,” she replied.

“Our children must pray earnestly that God may put us in the way of one in the meantime. I will tell them to-night after their Christmas-Tree festival; they must promise me to do so.”

“They will have great devotion, I assure you, with their eyes on the tree and their thoughts centered on the many gifts in their lap,” the count remarked quite amused.

There were still on the tray a dozen letters or more to be opened. The count had one in his hand and was reading it attentively. With emotion he turned it over to his wife saying: "Read it yourself!"

It happened to be the one from the pastor of the mission acknowledging the receipt of the thirty marks for Christmas. After thanking for the gift and expressing his best wishes to the noble couple, he related briefly and simply his experience during the last three days: the death and the circumstances surrounding it, of the unfortunate stranger; the Christian burial given to her remains; the pitiful infant left behind, the good will and generosity of his people.

"We are confident," the priest concluded, "that you will approve of the use we have made of the money. Your kind act in sending us the marks has produced a second; my parishioners in giving over the money generously to a woman who needed it more than anyone, were but emulating the example of charity you have given. The twofold fruit of your kindness will be treasured up no doubt, for you and yours in heaven."

She laid the letter aside. "Such misery, such a death—" she commented,—"oh, how I pity the poor woman, the wretched mother! What anguish of soul she must have endured! To be taken mortally sick, a stranger, unknown, penniless, with a child at her breast!"

She paused a moment. Suddenly an inspiration came to her. She took up the priest's letter

again and read: "For the present the child is housed and nursed by a mother in the parish; this good woman has work enough of her own, but until I can place it permanently, she is willing to take care of it . . ." "Leopold," said the countess, "the children need not pray for the intention I mentioned; the poorest child of all is at our beck and call,—the infant of the unknown stranger. We need not hesitate; seldom if ever will an orphan be found so poor, so helpless, so destitute."

"I agree with you perfectly, Irene. You will do well to write the priest immediately; tell him to have the infant brought to the Orphan's Home on the day of the Dedication. He will have time enough; this is Christmas Eve, therefore there are four days still until Holy Innocents. Nor will the trip be too cold for the Polish—or Slavic—or Bohemian—baby."

"What about the thirty marks?" the countess questioned her husband. "Surely the poor Catholics of the mission ought not be expected to sacrifice the whole sum. I admit the demands upon us this Christmas were unusually many and heavy; all the same, I hardly think that a second gift of thirty marks will make us poor. Let us send them to the zealous young priest. You will go halves, will you not, Leopold?" she asked with a mischievous smile. "Half, Irene, and no more," he answered; "for I do not wish to dispute your right that the gift ought to be all or mostly yours."

"God bless you, Leopold!"

The Orphan's Home of the Child Jesus was all in readiness awaiting the coming of its many guests. A Sisterhood had the house in charge. The building was of olden times, solid and massive in appearance, with a mighty roof and towers and balconies. Armorial crests of departed princely families carved in the granite rock on the corner stones and above the portals or chiseled in relief on the walls and ceilings, looked down with wonderment upon the new generation of quiet holy women, who, suspended from their girdles carried large Rosaries, the rattling of which was the only sound of their coming and going.

The dormitory, the refectory, the kitchen, the class and play-rooms, the corridors, in a word, every nook and cranny within the building was strictly in order and scrupulously clean. Sprigs of cedar and fir woven into garlands hung above the antique main portal and along the halls, so that the whole house was redolent of pine. During the festival-exercises in the chapel the priest delegated by the bishop, placed the Orphan's Home under the patronage of the Child Jesus, the Blessed Mother of God and of St. Joseph; he begged God as a special favor to give to the children who would be brought here for shelter, the Holy Innocents as protectors. They were the first martyrs to give their life for Christ; even so let us hope that these little innocents will be cared for and reared and educated to make them wholly Christ's before and after the dawn of reason and for all their life. Then going thru the rooms from

story to story he blessed and dedicated the asylum to God. With the Te Deum the chapel service ended.

Thereupon the Chairman of the Committee arose and after thanking the representative of the bishop for having performed the Dedication Service, he declared the Orphan's Home officially opened. Then he continued: "In grateful remembrance of the princely couple, Count Leopold and Countess Irene, who by their munificence have been chiefly instrumental in establishing this asylum, the directors of the same have agreed to found a free berth in this Home in their honor, and to grant Their Excellencies the privilege of choosing and naming a child for the place."

All eyes were turned on Count Leopold and his spouse at his side. He replied: "We have chosen a child but before placing it in the Home it must have a name. Unfortunately, the mother of the infant we have in view, died a total stranger in our midst. Nothing absolutely is known of her as to her country, her nationality, her antecedents. The chaplain of this asylum is therefore obliged he tells me, to give the child conditional Baptism when that is done the countess and I will present it for free admission into the Home."

Two Sisters now stepped forth, one of whom carried upon a pillow a dark-eyed infant. The Religious and the count and countess proceeded to the baptismal font. The priest asked: "By what name shall the child be baptized?" "Mary Irene Peregrina," the countess replied. "Mary

in honor of the Blessed Virgin, Irene in honor of her godmother, and Peregrina as the offspring of a total stranger."

When the baptismal vows were asked for, Countess Irene advanced and placing her right hand upon the head of the child, made the profession of faith and the solemn promises in the name of the child, distinctly and earnestly.

After Holy Baptism Count Leopold in his name and that of his spouse, presented the orphan to the Home, the while expressing his hope and confidence that the good Sisters would bring it up in the grace of God, an honor to the Church and State.

Countess Irene then took the little godchild in her arms and while the organ was playing a pleasing postlude, she carried it upstairs to the children's room, followed by all the distinguished ladies present at the celebration; making the Sign of the Cross on its forehead, she laid it gently in its crib.

So it happened that the poorest child in the whole country, found a warm and cozy home. No doubt, its mother, whose body, spent and lifeless was resting in blessed earth near the chapel of the mission parish, thanked God most fervently on this day for the mercy shown her and her infant daughter.

The Christmas Tree

A company of villagers were returning from the market Santa Lucia, hobbling and stumbling thru the woods, grumbling and scolding, home-ward bound. Some half-grown boys were in the lead driving four or five head of unsold cattle back to the farm. They could barely keep up with the animals so eager were these to reach their warm stables and get out of the snow and the cold. Moreover, night was setting in.

"Things have gone to the dogs ever since we are an Electorate; the hangman take us!" old man Weissberger loudly complained. "The order of the day is: Pay, pay! a half-dozen batz now, three florins to-morrow and double the amount the day after. But to make a couple of kreutzers there is no chance at all; people don't trust one another anymore; everyone you meet makes a poor mouth; not a single man—Ho—ho, there—halt!"

The lamentation of the cattleman was changed abruptly to an angry shout: "Hold on, hold on, Alois—don't let go, hold on—I'm coming to help you. Hey there, Gray! Be gentle, Gray!" As fast as his legs could carry him the man hastened to the assistance of the boy who was hardly able to keep up with an impatient cow he was leading by a rope.

"There was rejoicing in the beginning," another of the farmers remarked, "when we heard that the abbeys and the great lords were to be deprived of their wealth, but we were fools to rejoice; what good did we get out of the spoliation and robbery?"

"The Jews got it all," a third man of the group cried out.

"Yes, that's true, the Jews"—another of the fellows joined in loudly. "The Gentlemen from the Lowlands hadn't the faintest idea how to conduct the plundering of monasteries and estates."

"Be that as it may, it was wrong in any case to have acted that way toward the cloisters. It would at least have been of some benefit to the farmers and to the hard times at present—if the abbeys instead of being dissolved had been assessed a couple hundred or thousand marks or shorn of ten or twenty acres forest-land. But to suppress them entirely was idiotic; we had no idea this was intended; it wasn't right."

"No, it wasn't right," a partner to the last speaker agreed; "the looting of the churches and the sanctuaries, the carrying away of chalices, monstrances, crosses, tabernacle-lamps,—that was theft and robbery; if one of us had done it we would have been hanged and justly so, for the crime. It was sacrilege!"

"It is said that in the city of Munich, in the vicinity of Ludwig-Castle, chasubles and copes were exposed by the dozens and offered for sale."

“In Augsburg there were tons of silver of melted church-plate.”

“The common people, however, got nothing out of the loot.”

“The molten silver was made into knives and forks and plates and dishes, into dainty chairs and tables for the noble lords and their ladies, nay, even into wash-bowls.”

“There will be no blessing on such table-ware and boudoir furniture.”

“They don’t need any blessing,” a listener to the above interposed.

Many other remarks were made more or less bitter and wicked and were allowed to pass unchallenged. While thus shouting their complaints and criticisms to one another about the hard times, the suppression of the convents, about Napoleon and the terrible misery in the wake of his endless wars—it was in the beginning of the 19th Century—the men returning from the market had reached the end of the woods and were approaching their little town which half-buried in snow looked at them sadly from an adjacent plain.

It was six in the evening. The big-toned bell began to toll the Angelus; instantly the conversation ceased and the men recited the accustomed prayer. They had hardly finished when one of the group nodding to the church remarked in a low voice: “That church now is ours. Heretofore we attended the church of the nuns, hereafter the nuns will attend our church.”

"It will make a mighty difference!" his companion observed with a bitter laugh.

"This difference, at all events, that henceforth we and not the nunnery will have to keep up the church," Mr. Tannenberger grimly added.

"That's a nice piece of business!" the second-last speaker muttered; "and look at the church," he continued; "it is bare, despoiled! It had been provided with everything necessary and now there is nothing left not even the bells excepting the big one. They plundered the church of everything."

"It will be a sorry Midnight Mass!"

"Midnight Mass! Why, I heard some one say it is forbidden."

"Forbidden! Who can forbid it? We would like to see anyone try it!"—"That would be the very limit!" "Do they wish to make us Lutherans? That's all that is still wanting to suit them."

Such were the observations and comments bandied back and forth. The men were thoroughly aroused. Having arrived in the town they bid each other Good night and separated.

Mr. Tannenberger, a big, powerful, middle-aged man went home to his farmhouse the same as the others.

"Papa, a letter, a letter!" was the greeting he received from his little son and daughter as he entered the house. His wife pointed to the table upon which a large letter, stamped with a big red seal, lay. The house was all excitement.

The letter contained nothing excepting a curt official order appointing Mr. Tannenberger,

whether he liked it or not, Warden of the former convent church which had recently been given over to the town. The second part of the communication contained these interesting details: "For the decent celebration of Divine Services in the church, the treasury will allow annually, twelve florins for Mass-Wine and six florins for the laundering of the altar-linens; the Warden is entitled and ordered to provide forty wax-candles a year, and a pound and a half of incense, etc." Mrs. Tannenberger could not help laughing when she heard the catalogue of items.

"I would like to know who will wash, starch and iron the church-wash for six florins a year," she said.

"Yes, and when I come to think of it," the new Warden remarked, "twelve florins for Mass-Wine annually will allow just one and one-half kreutzer per day. That's shabby indeed!"

"I suppose the Gentlemen down at Stuttgart are of the opinion that the Tannenbergers will make up the deficits on the Church-Wash bill," the wife scoffed and laughed.

To which her husband replied with bitterness: "It is not at all improbable. The 'rich' Tannenberger who forces from the soil scarcely enough to feed his household is expected to help fill the purses of the 'poor' Government officials. No doubt I am even under obligations to them for the good opinion they have of me. Let them send a deputy from down there or the treasurer himself,

to become Church-Warden—I don't want the honor."

"Do you know what, Joseph?" Mrs. Tannenberger suggested. "Go over to-morrow morning and speak to the prioress about the matter; she is a very sensible woman and knows us; do what she will tell you."

The next morning he called at the convent as his wife had suggested. The prioress appeared at the grate. After listening to what he had to say about his appointment she advised him to accept it. Nothing really happens by chance, she went on to say; notwithstanding that the order came thru the treasurer or some other official, it was by the dispensation of God; no one knows but that in this, God has some special blessing in store for you. Moreover, it is an honor and a good work to be privileged to procure what is necessary for the celebration of the Holy Mass and other Divine Services.

"That's true enough," he agreed, "if only I had the money! The amount allowed me by the treasurer will not last half a year. As for me—I have nothing. The times are bad—nothing but soldiers and wars and taxes and gloomy prospects; I can't sell anything because since the crops have failed I have nothing to sell; and if perchance somebody buys of me a miserable head or two of cattle, in a short time the money is gone. My only resource would be to steal like those Gentlemen in the Capital."

"Not so fast, Warden, not so fast," the prioress smiled; "remember you are an official now!"

"I didn't mean anything by it," he replied; "but what am I to do, when the Rev. Chaplain or the Confessor says to me: 'I need more candles and the Mass Wine is out and please procure more incense, otherwise I must dispense with the censer at funerals and at the grave,' what then am I to do? Should I go begging?"

"And if you did, Mr. Tannenberger, it would be no disgrace," the wise Religious answered. "Believe me, the adage applies in your case as in others. 'To whom God gives an office He also gives the grace necessary to fill it.' The priests will readily understand the position you are in. Shabbily and mercilessly as they have treated our Blessed Savior in the church, they have acted also toward our chaplain and our convent. Think of it: They have robbed us of four thousand florins, the funding or endowment during sixty years of an annual High Mass, and besides this they took what other little money we had; the poor chaplain is bound as heretofore to say these Founded Masses and receives nothing in return. Yet for all that he did not lose his peace of mind. 'If in their greed and meanness,' he said, 'they have torn the very cross, the golden chain and cross, from the Abbot of Wiblingen and Zwiefalten, why should I complain for having lost my stipend howsoever much needed? More than ever have I a right now to pray, Give us this day our daily bread.'

"You ought to reason in the same way, Mr. Tannenberger; accept the office and do the best you can; the nuns and I will pray for you. If you wait a minute I will send for the Sister Sacristan; she will be able to tell you many a thing you ought to know as Church Warden. You are aware she has been discharged from her office because the church is no longer ours; by special favor of the Government we are still permitted to pray within its walls and also graciously to remain in our nunnery till we have died out. Even the little that has escaped the ruthless robbery of the Secularization is ours no more, it is in your charge."

"Alas! the pity of it," he exclaimed, as the prioress left the grill. The sacristan came into the room soon after. There was a look of inexpressible sorrow in her eyes, red and swollen from weeping. While relating the story of the spoliation of the church and sacristy she halted every now and then to repress a convulsive sob; the holy place was despoiled of everything that was not absolutely necessary; the sacred vessels, the rich vestments, artistic paintings and rare books were piled up and carried away. "If they had confined themselves to taking the gold and silver plate," she continued, "their avarice would have been intelligible; but they robbed the church of articles which could have been of absolutely no use to them, simply for the reason that we prized them highly.

"For example, the white chasuble, the handiwork of the Bl. Crescentia of Kaufbeuern. The holy

virgin had made it for us upon the occasion of a visit she paid our convent. Oh! how I wept when I saw a rude fellow snatch it out of its case and throw it on the table. Just because of my tears he appraised it as an article of special value and all my pleadings that he let us keep it, were of no avail. Last of all they took," the Sister unable to control herself any longer was weeping loudly, "they took the crib with the little Child Jesus; the infant is a lovely figure two hundred years old and very much treasured by us because before it the nuns annually renewed their vows and swore fealty to God on St. Catherine's Day and again during the Christmas time. The statue is the gift to our convent from a Viennese princess and once upon a time St. John Capistran spent a whole night in prayer before it. And now they have taken it away—and a fortnight hence is Christmas!"

With her hands before her face the guileless, innocent nun sobbed as if her heart would break.

A slight cough was heard in the rear of the room. It came from the young nun who had accompanied the Sister Sacristan into the parlor. The latter looked at her.

"Madam Martha," said the nun in a timid voice yet so as to be understood by Mr. Tannenberger, "my mother was over there only yesterday and she told me that the crib and the Mass vestments had been sold to Mr. Altmaier of Memmingen who perhaps might return them."

"Is that a fact, Sister Caritas, is that a fact?" the sacristan addressed her companion with an almost jubilant voice. "In that case we will get them again. Oh! would that I could visit him, I would walk my feet bloody if I were so fortunate to be allowed to bring back the little Jesus and the sacred vestments, even if I had to climb yonder hill upon my hands and feet. I would be willing to endure hunger even to death in order thereby to save a little money and—oh, dear Mr. Tannenberger!" she raised her hands in supplication, "I beseech you,—never in all my life nor during eternity will I forget the favor—please, do you go over to Memmingen and bring back to us the crib and the chasuble which the Blessed Crescenzia made. O dearest Child Jesus! What a cruel thought it is that on the very eve of Christmas Thy sweet image is lying on the shelves in the store of a tradesman, forgotten, in a corner perhaps, in a dark nook; it is enough to break my heart! You will go, will you not, Mr. Tannenberger, to Memmingen?"

The farmer was taken by surprise. The magic of the Sister's voice or rather her holy enthusiasm had subdued him and before he knew what he was about he had given his word: "Yes, Lady Sacristan," he said, "I will go to Memmingen to-morrow. If the crib is still there and the chasuble, I will procure them for you."

"Thanks be to God without end! May He return the favor to you and yours a thousand times over!" the exultant nun exclaimed time and

again. "May the Child Jesus bless and reward you!"

* * *

Mr. Tannenberger, the new Church Warden was kneeling in the secularized convent church; he did not pray, he did not speak to God; instead he listened to the mute lament of the dismantled sanctuary. The bare walls, the three altars depoiled, bewailed their desolation: "Desecrated are we by sacrilegious hands, robbed of our dowry of honor; in weeds we mourn our deflowerment in the sight of God. We have been defiled and made the scoff and scorn of the unbeliever; He that dwells with infinite longanimity within the Holy Tabernacle has been divested of glory and honor as far as this is humanly possible and upon a stripped altar He is left unloved, unhonored and severely alone. But even tho we, the walls and the altars, have been denuded by rash and desperate hands, we will mingle our praise with our sighs and forever cry out: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of Sabaoth! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' And day and night within these precincts will the angels, so supremely happy in their heavenly endowment, swell the chorus of praise and sing 'Holy, holy, holy—Thou Son of God, Thou Son of the Virgin Mary—dwelling and enthroned here under the veil of bread!'"

The devotional atmosphere of the place, the sacred influence of a thousand silent angelic spirits prone in adoration before the Tabernacle,

had captured the heart of the solitary worshiper. Whatever the convent church had lost thru impious men, he, inflamed with the love of God and with zeal for the glory of His house, stood ready to replace. So pledged himself the new Church Warden.

It was not an impetuous, emotional resolve that swayed him, on the contrary, he was cool and deliberate; there was burning within him a fire suddenly enkindled by God, to satisfy which he swore to do all in his power to restore to the holy sanctuary what had been stolen therefrom and procure whatever was necessary for Divine Worship. "Even tho I am poor," he said, "I am rich in good wishes and my will is strong. I will do for God what I can to the end of my life."

In this state of mind he started for home.

It was a glorious winter day resplendent with light of a dazzling white such as is never seen even under the beautiful southern skies. The plains and the uplands as far as the eye could see were veiled with a wondrous white-silken fabric of crystalline snow, which covering the prosaic houses and barns, softened to poetic curves their imperfect lines and angles.

Upon a knoll in the vicinity, weighted and low-bowed with the snowy fleece that had fallen from the skies and lodged in their branches, stood a dozen or so of mighty fir-trees that had given to the adjoining farm the name Tannenberg, which means "Fir-hill," and to its proprietor the name Tannenberger.

Farmer Tannenberger on his way home stopped every now and then as if lost in thought. It was not the wonders of nature that preoccupied his mind but questions of a more practical kind. "Where will I get the money to repurchase the crib and the chasuble? Supposing Altmaier has already sold them? What if he should charge me too much?" One single crown was all the cash he had on hand and if his wife has laid anything by it would amount to three or four florins at most.

What could he do with this paltry sum?

He halted for the last time and looked up. There in the near distance lay his little farm with a small cozy house in the center. Towering upward majestically the dozen fir-tress stood close by, like faithful sentinels on guard to protect his land and home. Never before did they look so grand and imposing. They were stately trees and emblematic of the moral nobility of his ancestors. "Straight and flawless as the firs on the hill," was a favorite saying of his grandfather.

"If ever I am so unfortunate as to lose my house by fire which God forbid, there on the knoll is wood enough in prospect to rebuild," he mused. "The trees represent indeed a small fortune, even tho they do not grow farthings and sixpences; they are my sole fortune in the world.—"

Suddenly a thought passed thru his mind that made him tremble with joy. With admiring

eyes he surveyed the stately trees again, robed in their ermine-tipped mantles of green.

"I have it now—the problem is solved!" the farmer nodded, while his searching gaze wandered from one fir to the other. They were tall trees, none less than sixty feet high. Among them, however, lording it over the others stood the queen of them all, a magnificent specimen one hundred feet and more, with a solid massive trunk sound to its very core from its foot to its snow-crowned top.

This particular tree had been the joy of his father and grandfather; it was the pride of the country around.

"Yes, God has put the thought into my head," he soliloquized taking off his fox-skin cap. "Dear Infant Jesus, that one," pointing to the regal fir, "I'll make a present of to Thee for Christmas. Thou art a child like others in this, that it will give Thee pleasure to receive a Christmas gift whether from the poor or from the rich. It is now customary to make happy the children with a Christmas Tree, therefore do I present that one to Thee. It is immense in height and girth but Thou art the very God to whom the mightiest oak or fir is merely a plaything. This afternoon I'll bargain with the Timber Merchant; every farthing and penny which he will allow me for the wood I'll use to buy back the stolen crib and vestment and also to purchase candles for Christmas night. To Thee, and to Thee only, I present the grandest of my trees, and with pleasure. Neither merchant nor woodcutter could have obtained it

from me at any price. Accept it from me, O my Jesus! and in return take under Thy protection my wife and children, especially the boys, and if I am not presuming too much, my little farm also, that it may be preserved to me during these evil times and that nothing may happen to my house and barn."

Having finished his prayer, Mr. Tannenberger put on his fur-cap and hastened home. Without any argument the good wife agreed with her husband in his pious resolve. "Now that you are Warden," she said, "I would be afraid of sinning in opposing your plans for the church; God has given us the fir and built our little house, He could if He would destroy both and shatter them to pieces with a single lightningstroke."

Footing his way thru the woods, Mr. Tannenberger called upon the Timber Dealer. After much haggling the merchant agreed to pay fourteen carolins and a crown—a little over seventy dollars—for the tree including the stump and the branches. The farmer spent the night in the city with a cousin and the next morning he was on his way to Memmingen to visit the store of Mr. Altmaier. He found the storekeeper at home but not in the best of humor. His competitor Aaron Seligmann, had outbid him on a lot of Church Vestments,—taking them, so to speak, from under his very nose.

Altmaier was furiously enraged at this; he thought they were his at his own price for having bribed the official who had them in charge, with

the gift of a golden snuff-box. How he cursed the Jew, and wished that he were buried in the bottom of the Dead Sea along with the Sodomites and Gomorrhites! Fortunately he still had the crib and let Mr. Tannenberger have it cheaper than he expected. "The chasuble and the other vestments the Jew has snatched from my grasp," Mr. Altmaier stated, "and no doubt is holding them for sale at a fancy price unless he has already sent them to Munich."

The Warden next inquired where he might buy candles for Christmas; the storekeeper gave him the address of the chandler and at the same time drew his attention to a seven-branched bronze candlestick. "That would look fine," he said, "in front of the crib and I will let you have it cheap. So he did, for the buyer got it for two crowns. With the crib and the candelabrum securely tied to a sled which Mr. Altmaier had loaned him, Tannenberger went to the Wax-Dealer and bought a number of tall half-pound candles, after which he called on Seligmann, the Jew. There he found out that the chasuble made by the Blessed Crescentia was wrapped up in a bundle with other vestments ready for shipment;—the gold braid, the gold lace, and the coat of arms in gold, however, had been torn off and carefully laid aside.

A trading tilt for life and death began immediately between Tannenberger and Seligmann. On either side an eagerness to strike a bargain was evident which the simulated lack of inter-

est as well on part of the shrewd Warden as on that of the wily Jew could not conceal. The farmer as if haughtily spurning the terms that were offered him, had left the store for the third time and gone quite a distance when the Jew called him back. At this moment the keen eyes of the Israelite detected the brazen candlestick on the sled.

His face mantled with unspeakable joy. That was the very candelabrum which for a hundred years had stood in the Synagogue of Frankfort; six years ago it had disappeared, stolen no doubt, by some Russian or Frenchman and sold to Altmaier. The latter had not the faintest idea of its ritual significance. On the contrary, he thought it was an ordinary piece of booty taken from a Catholic Church which had served as a luminary during Holy Week. Whether it had seven or twelve arms he had not particularly noticed. Aaron Seligmann had seen the candlestick in his rival's store and had tried to repurchase it for his religious brethren to whom it was a most sacred object. But his bitter competitor told him to leave his premises as fast as he could or he would kick him out and twist his neck. With inexpressible delight therefore the Jew saw a way of procuring the prized article from Tannenberger.

The business between the farmer and the Jew accordingly settled down to a barter. Seligmann with an assumed indifference spoke for the candelabrum; Tannenberger on the alert noticed how

desperately the fellow wanted the article and therefore higgled and haggled over its exchange price more than ever. The outcome was that the Jew got the candlestick plus four florins, and the Warden, the chasuble of Blessed Crescentia and all the other vestments besides.

Proud as a hero returning with his trophies from war, Tannenberger pulled his heavily-laden sled homeward. Late at night he reached his house and tho tired to death he could hardly sleep for very joy. Next morning he brought the treasures to the convent. The nuns who had prayed incessantly for the success of his mission, wept when they saw again the crib and the prized chasuble. There was still time before Christmas to go over and fix up the more or less damaged vestments. It is true the magnificent monstrance, the golden chalice so richly bejeweled and the large silver candelabra were missing, and simpler ones had to serve for the Holy Sacrifice on Christmas Day, but the good Sisters looked at it in the right way: "After all, the Most Precious beyond comparison, Our Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, they could not take away, He remains with us." This was their great sufficient consolation during the time of this visitation.

Christmas, at midnight, the big bell of the secularized convent church rang out the festive message to the clear, star-spangled sky and to the country around. From all directions the young and the old, men and women, wrapped in cloaks and furs and overcoats, streamed silently toward

the church and filled it to overflowing. There was a rumor about that this would be the last time Midnight Mass would be allowed; it was already forbidden in Stuttgart. The High Altar and the two others were ablaze with candles. The gilded scrolls and statuettes and diminutive columns of the Rococo altars shone with a splendor which they lacked even in the daytime. Vested in the chasuble of the Blessed Crescentia, the chaplain celebrated the High Mass and the Sisters sang in the choir as in former years. When the Gloria in excelsis Deo had been intoned, the violins and viola chimed in, with the one-stringed Bass which carried a low note like a horn. The voices and the instruments together sounded so beautifully that the people compared the singing to that of the angels in heaven. Especially was this true of the "Adeste, fideles," which was sung after the Epistle and before the Gospel. The whole congregation awaited this hymn with a joyful impatience; as never before were they deeply effected by the triple refrain: Venite adoremus —Come let us adore. And indeed, it is an exultant invitation most beautiful, most inspiring, most captivating to young and old, to adore and thank and love Him, who to save and make man happy, had left His heavenly home.

Mr. Tannenberger and his wife were signalily honored on this day. They were invited to come to the Nuns' Choir, not inside of it, of course, but in the loft, to occupy a recess which in the past had been reserved only for distinguished visi-

tors. In this curtained balcony the pious couple knelt and prayed; vantaged thus they could see the festive altar, the people in the church below, and the white-habited nuns who screened from the public were assisting at the Mass playing the instruments and singing. In the fore-centre of the gallery there was a little altar upon which stood an image blackened with age of the Mother of Sorrows; at its base surrounded by a countless number of small waxen lights was the selfsame ancient crib before which once upon a time St. John Capistran had spent a night, and which having been stolen and sold, it was the good fortune of Mr. Tannenberger to repurchase and restore to the convent.

The bell had been rung for the Consecration of the Mass and all heads were bowed in adoration of the Hidden God veiled under the sacramental species.

Noiselessly the old prioress arose and accompanied by two nuns went to the little altar. The three knelt before it and then in accordance with an ancient custom, she, in her name and that of the Sisters, renewed the holy vows which for life and death bound them to Jesus, the Bridegroom of their souls. Her voice trembling and uncertain at first, became steadier and louder as she proceeded with the formula of consecration, till at last the people in the church could make out every word. Filled with awe and devotion there was not one in the Congregation who did not from his heart sincerely repeat what he heard the

prioress read: "We pledge to be true to Thee, Dear Jesus, true to our faith, true to our Holy Church, for life and death, in want, in danger, in happiness, in misery,—" imperceptibly blending with the last words the violins fell in sweetly and softly as she concluded—"Sweet Jesus, for Thee I live, Jesus, for Thee I die,"—the harmonic union of the modulated voice and the instruments melted gradually away with the last invocation—"Thine, Jesus, I am in life and in death."

The new Church Warden had likewise joined in the prayer and repeated the promises he had made to his God some days before; then he placed himself, his house and home and those dear to him under God's protection. His good wife turning to the Mother of God, added: "Blessed mother of God, to please thee and thy divine Son, my husband has rescued from the bondage of the warehouse the statue of thy Divine Infant; do thou, then, in return, speak to Jesus a word in favor of my children, especially of the boys, that they may always remain good!"

That Christmas morning after the second Mass, the Tannenbergers, husband and wife, were invited to dine with the Lady Prioress in the guest-room. During the course of the meal the aged nun said: "Mr. Tannenberger, if it were within my power I would raise your family to the nobility and for a coat of arms upon your escutcheon would trace a fir-tree with a crib at its foot. At all events, rest assured our Lord will

not forget you and yours for the joy you have given Him to-day."

The people coming from church that morning remarked that never before had there been so large an attendance at the Midnight Mass, nor the services so devotional and beautiful.

"Yes, and it may have been for the last time," one of the parishioners observed.

Alas! he was right. The year following the midnight bell was mute and the church-door locked. The Government had ordered that services must not be held before break of day.

The years came and went. The number of the nuns was growing smaller and smaller. To the end, however, they lived piously and retired, faithful to the vows they had made to God. It was in the year forty that the last of the Community was borne to her resting place and bedded beside the Sister who but shortly before had gone to her reward.

Mr. Tannenberger true to his word had expended every penny of the price of the fir, for the church. He did more than that. The disappearance one by one of the magnificent trees from the Tannenberg Farm was related, as is effect and cause, with the new articles that were being constantly added to the depleted convent church.

A century has elapsed. The family of the Warden is in possession of Tannenberg Farm to this day. If their godly forebear a hundred years ago eked out a precarious living, his ancestry of

to-day have extensive lands, a commodious house, ample barns and choice cattle and horses. The children and grandchildren of the Warden thru all these generations have proved loyal to their Church and an honor to the State. It was like a miracle when despite the universal conscription in the days of Napoleon, Tannenberger's oldest son was overlooked and permitted to remain at home. A great source of income to the farm is a wood near the house. Begun with plantlets and added to from year to year, cultivated and carefully looked after, it produces a small fortune annually in marketable timber. Another unfailing source of revenue for the proprietor is found in the sale of Christmas Trees, for the nurture and multiplication of which there is seemingly no soil so adapted as that of the Tannenberg Farm.

The Ranger's Boy

"Who would have prophesied to me such a Christmas day!" exclaimed Marty, Chief Ranger of the ducal preserves, with an effort at self-control, while his wife was applying hot bandages to his foot. The big, powerful man lying on a bench near the stove uttered a groan every now and then altho his good wife Ursula was as careful and gentle as possible in nursing him.

"Tis too bad, Marty; 'twill be the first time you've missed *Midnight Mass*," she said; "I would rather I had the injured foot. And a very stubborn bruise it is, that doesn't want to heal; it was just a week yesterday Carl Kiezer brought you home."

"A week already," he grunted, his brow contracting angrily; "a whole week already, and of all men Carl Kiezer the one who brought me home!" He stared upward at the ceiling.

"I've bound and fixed you up; you're all right again for the meantime, Marty," Ursula comforted him; "the surgeon said you must remain quiet, that's the principal thing, then you'll be on your feet before long. I must leave you now to go to the baker to buy some simnel loaves and then to the sexton's wife; our votive-candle was

consumed during the Rorate; she may be able to procure us another.

Putting on a shawl, she remarked as she left the room: "I'll leave the door ajar; Frank will soon be here, for it is already past three o'clock."

She started accordingly, leaving the forester at home suffering with a troublesome foot and a conscience which troubled him more.

It is true, in one respect it was not exactly his fault, but from another point of view it was. How often had he been warned by his grandfather: "Marty, don't go security for anybody; never sign a bond; I tell you never sign a bond! What does Holy Scripture say: 'Be not with them that offer themselves sureties for debts.' You haven't a farthing to throw away. It may seem to you to be merely a matter of signing your name to a paper; you will find when it is too late that your money will be demanded when the note is due. I know at least a dozen who were made poor, who lost house and land because they went security. Grandson, never go on a bond!"

Marty always listened deferentially to the many good instructions his grandfather, a good and experienced man, gave him; but this particular advice he thought, did not concern him at all. Moreover, whose bond was he to sign or who would come to him for that purpose.

And yet what seemed so improbable had come to pass. He had been entrapped and had gone security—for his own brother-in-law. This relative was official forester in the wildest and re-

motest part of the ducal estate, some miles distant from Marty's domain. The latter was very proud of it that his sister had married a man who was entitled to strut about in a green uniform; especially so, since he was at the same time an excellent huntsman and in high favor with the prince who had promised to make him Head Forester in the not distant future. Unfortunately, however, he had this against him that he visited the taproom too often and for half-days at a time.

The taverner was partly to blame for this. There was no one so welcome to him as the jolly huntsman in the green livery; for when he came into the tavern, a crowd of admirers followed in his wake, to be amused at his tales of real or imaginary adventure in the woods, or to be entertained by his songs which to his own accompaniment on the guitar, were really beautiful. The forester's visits were therefore very profitable to the innkeeper and consequently he was invited to come often and was never charged for the liquor he consumed. But this did not help the huntsman's wife and children. They had to be clothed and fed and cared for in health and in sickness. To meet the many expenses incident to the bringing up of his family, he found himself short of money. In his straits he called upon the proprietor of the Fox Inn at Eibental. This man promised to loan him a hundred florins on his note if he could get some one to go security for him. "It is a mere formality, after all," said the

taverner of The Fox, when the forester presented his note signed by himself and his brother-in-law, the Chief Ranger.

Marty, recollecting for a moment the warning his grandfather had so often given him upon this point, felt rather uneasy at the time he put his name to the paper. But he did it all the same, for he had not the heart to leave the husband of his own sister in the lurch. The huntsman, however, was quite surprised when he noticed how readily the landlord of The Fox accepted the signature of his poor relative, Marty, and indeed, so was the latter. For surely neither the taverner nor any one else knew of the sixty florins Marty and his wife had laboriously saved up and laid by for a rainy day. Be that as it may, mine host of The Fox and his backer knew what they were about.

A few short years had passed by rapidly, when one morning Marty received a letter from Theodore Kiezer, or, as he was called for short, Dores, informing him briefly that the writer had bought the huntsman's note from the proprietor of the Fox Inn and that since his relative the huntsman had avowed his inability to meet it, the present holder of the same was obliged to call upon the endorser, the Head Forester Marty, to pay it in full by Candlemas-day.

The letter informed Marty at the same time that it was contrary to the "policy and principle" of Dores to agree to partial payments. The debt amounted to the following: first, the principal, one

hundred florins which the landlord of The Fox had loaned the huntsman; secondly, interest for four and a half years at six and one half per cent, which amounts to twenty-nine florins and fifteen kreutzers; thirdly, as charge for extension of credit beyond maturity, forty-five florins; this made a grand total of one hundred seventy-four florins fifteen kreutzers, to which was added three kreutzers postage. "You will notice," the letter stated, "that you stand surety not only for the principal of the debt but also for the full interest accrued." Poor Marty had entirely overlooked this proviso on the fraughted paper he had signed which held him liable for principal and interest.

The messenger had met and handed the letter to Marty on the road. This was fortunate, for it enabled him to keep the secret from his wife. Ursula would have fainted from fright if she had been told the dread news. What little she had saved in the sweat of her brow she regarded more sacredly even than did her husband. The debt in which he was involved would swallow it up entirely.

Marty said not a word about it to his wife. Instead he walked over to the neighboring forest to call upon his frivolous brother-in-law,—fruitlessly of course. He addressed the "Green Peacock" with every abusive adjective found within the vocabulary of a Chief Ranger, in which the words "good-for-nothing" and "scoundrel," carried thru all the known grammatical degrees, pre-

dominated—but no money was forthcoming. Squirming under the merciless tongue-lashing, the brother-in-law finally replied: "I am sorry but what am I to do? There is nothing left excepting for you or Kiezer to attach my wages; however, if you do that it will cost me my position; then, I, my wife and your nephews and nieces will be obliged to work as common laborers in the woods. If this is what you want, all right, I am willing."

"No, no!" the simple ranger interrupted his artful relative. "I didn't mean it in that way..."

Next Marty paid a visit to The Fox in order to give the landlord a piece of his mind. Upon entering, the taverner blinked at him slyly with his left eye as if he meant to say: "You have come at last. I have been expecting you." Quite naturally the roguish tapster was wholly innocent in the matter. He excused himself by saying he was getting old and could not be bothered any longer with interest and the collection of debts, that therefore he had been only too glad to sell the note to Dores Kiezer; he avowed that he was himself a loser by the transaction but he preferred to keep mum about it. If Marty was looking for relief he must see Dores. The latter is not as hard to deal with as commonly reported; one must know simply how to handle him; he is open to conviction and a man you can talk to. Let the ranger have confidence in him, especially if he can do him a little favor; in that case Dores will show himself grateful. "Try him, try doing him a favor, I repeat—"

"Yes, if I only knew in what way I could be of service to him," Marty said as he straightened himself up, "I would do anything for him, work my finger-nails off."

With a somewhat lighter heart he walked into the Kiezer Store. Dores kept a grocery at Eibenthal in company with his brother Carl. They were elderly men, and bachelors from motives of sheer avarice, the people said. Carl gave his chief attention to the Kiezer Farm, while Dores more particularly looked after the little store and a loan office in connection with it of questionable repute.

Dores and the ranger talked together for two or three hours. When the latter left the office it was dark. This was lucky for if any one had seen poor Marty as he stepped from the usurer's dirty little store he would have been frightened at the man. He looked ahead with a fixed stare, his face was pale as death, his brain covered with beads of perspiration; bent and nervous he walked away a dishonored man. Thru a thaw in an ice-covered window pane, Dores rubbing his hands with malignant delight, watched his crest-fallen victim. "Ah, I have him also entrapped!"

Marty writhed with suppressed rage as he lay on the bench near the stove at the very thought of his shameful capitulation to the proposal of the unscrupulous money lender. Dores had his plan laid out artfully. He began by stating he needed the money badly by Candlemas; if Marty had not the ready cash he must pawn the equivalent. The

wily usurer kept insisting on the words pawning and mortgaging until he had the ranger frightened and bewildered. Mindful of the advice of the taverner, Marty now meekly inquired if there was not a way of satisfying his creditor by doing him a favor. Thereupon Dores hesitated for a moment as if lost in thought, then pouring out and handing his victim a glass of Elderberry wine, he unfolded to him slowly, shrewdly, little by little, the project he had in his mind.

"It is just ten days before Christmas. Every day henceforth till Christmas Eve Carl will bring a wagonload of Christmas Trees to the city on the boundary. There is a chance for you to help along; you can procure trees cheap, quite cheap, very cheap indeed. What are a few dozen firs to the prince who has fifty thousand acres of land! It is even advisable to thin out the groves here and there so that the growth of the best of the trees be not retarded. If you are willing to do this you can earn considerable money which would go on your debt. In that case there would be no further annoyance for the present. The note would remain in the safe."

This was a revelation to Marty. If at first he felt like grabbing Dores by the scruff of the neck and breaking every bone in his covetous body, upon second thought the suggestion became more and more plausible as a business proposition. Nor was there any risk about it. As Chief Ranger he could go into the woods at any time; he knew the roads and bypaths by night as well as by day,

knew where the firs were thickest and where and when they could be cut without the slightest danger of detection; moreover, he could trust the farmers of the vicinity, they would never betray him.

"But what about the guards and the sub-ranger?" Marty who had by this time succumbed to the temptation, nervously muttered.

Dores laughed at the question. "Marty, have you forgotten that the chief watchman of that part of the reserve prolific in young firs, is your brother-in-law? Do you for a moment imagine that he would report you; he, mind you, who is the sole cause of your embarrassment? Did you not save him from ruin and disgrace? To whom is he indebted for being still privileged to wear the green uniform? To you alone! Then how would he dare to betray you? Believe me, as sure as I am sitting here, your relative will not interfere with your work; the forest, moreover, is large and he has business of his own in other parts of it. All I mean to say is this, that a man's a fool to permit a hare to escape that has run into his kitchen. I assure you, the note indorsed by you will remain in my safe, if you will assist me in this business deal in Christmas Trees."

Marty was conquered. He agreed to act and then and there arranged the details. He yielded because, on the one hand, he was much attached to the money which he had helped Ursula to save, and on the other, because he was afraid of his wife, of her scoldings and lamentations, in

case she should be apprised of his desperate position. Hardly, however, had he left the close and pestilential atmosphere of Kiezer's office and stepped out into the fresh open air under the vast star-spangled canopy of heaven when he became himself again. A deep shame took possession of him. Nevertheless, he felt that he could not retrace his steps. He had been led into a trap from which there was no escape. In intent he was a thief already, a timber thief, a disloyal man who henceforth could not face even the meanest of laborers and woodcutters under him with an honest, steady eye.

The evil heart of Dores was bubbling over with joy. "I played my game well!" he soliloquized; "I have both of them now in my power, Marty and the huntsman, and I'll make them serve me to the limit. The Christmas Trees are only the entering wedge to their resistance and obstinacy. They will have to furnish me stove-wood next, then lumber, then hares, deer and all kinds of game. Of the two, Marty will be the more compliant. But supposing even that he objects and rebels, then I will simply threaten him and his brother-in-law with exposure. The picture of the penitentiary will make and keep them submissive. Eh, landlord, a fine piece of business! The next time I call at The Fox serve me a bottle or two of your best!"

It was agreed that two days after the interview the tree-stealing should begin. The evening was wet and foggy, threatening rain and snow.

Marty was busy cutting down tree after tree in a thicket of firs that grew on an upland at the end of the woods near the boundary line. Some distance away, concealed in a grove, Carl, the brother of Dores, was waiting with a horse and wagon. The weather favored the thieves, it was blustering, that is, rain was beginning to fall and the wind was blowing hard. Suddenly an apparition coming out from the darkness of the valley foot-ing the hill, rudely interrupted the woodchopper: "Stop! Arrested for tort! Don't move or I'll shoot!"

Having recovered from his surprise, Marty was at a loss to decide whether to laugh or curse, that it was not the brother-in-law but his keen, nosy sub-ranger, who had discovered him in his nefarious work. "Your name!" the watchman demanded. Marty grunted something unintelligible. The sub-ranger had got close to him by this time; looking into his face he exclaimed: "Good God, why that's—"

Instantly Marty seized the rifle of the guard, wrenched it from his grasp and hurled it as far as he could into the brush. Thereupon a desperate wrestling match followed between the two men, the result of which was that the underling having received a terrific blow on his jaw was pitched headlong down the steep, moss-covered side of the hill upon which they had fought. The body of the unfortunate man kept on rolling till it landed in the creek at the foot of the incline. Leaving the felled trees on the ground, Marty

fled from the scene as fast as he could. It is needless to say that Carl had disappeared even before this.

In his flight, the ducal Chief Ranger tripped over a projecting root and badly wrenched his foot. For fully an hour he was obliged to creep on all fours till he came to a house where assistance was obtained; four hours later he reached his own home.

Such was the beginning of Marty's tree-stealing; he never tried it again. Sick in body and sicker in soul he was lying helpless on a bench near the stove this Christmas Eve.

His wife Ursula, of course, had not the faintest suspicion of all this; she pitied her husband most sincerely on account of the accident. "If she only knew!" Marty whispered to himself, while his face burned with shame and anger. What disquieted him still more was the uncertainty of what Dores would do next. The Christmas-Tree venture had miscarried once and for all time. Would he grant him an extension of time or insist upon payment by Candlemas? But the worst was this: On the morning after the accident, Ursula showed her husband his hunting jacket, and pointing to a rent in it, inquired what had caused it, and how he had lost the large, brass deer-head button which was missing.

He suffered intense agony during those hours and days. Whenever he heard a noise or a step on the outside, he thought it was a policeman coming to arrest him. Many a time he was so

tortured that he was upon the point of confessing the sad story to his wife, to the priest, to the prince.

But let the results be what they may, he had sworn that Dores who had entrapped him once would never do so a second time, if it cost him his life. The money for which he was liable was, after all, little or nothing compared to the agony of mind he had already endured even aside from other possible consequences. Then, the sleepless nights of the past week, with the shame and remorse incident to his misdeeds, which weighed like a load of lead on his brain!

If only he knew what became of the lost button he might sleep with some security. The sub-ranger, a man zealous to imprudence, who would have made a better policeman or detective than a forest sentinel, was eagerly on the lookout to detect and arrest as many transgressors upon the ducal premises as possible, in order thereby to ingratiate himself with the prince. He lost no time therefore in acquainting the duke with the attempted theft of the firs and with his prowess which nearly cost him his life. "No doubt," said the underling, "that fellow is an old, experienced, desperate game and timber-thief."

The old duke was very much excited at the story; among all his possessions, his trees and forests were dearest to him. Princess Adelheit, consort of the duke, winked to the imprudent guard to cut short his story of the depredation, for she noticed that her husband, the prince, was

getting more and more excited and that a paroxysm of ungovernable anger to which he was liable upon the least provocation, was imminent; but the man with a craven, servile zeal refused to take the hint. Upon the prince's inquiring whether he had recognized the thief, the sub-ranger triumphantly answered: "Yes, Your Excellency; altho it was quite dark, I got close to the fellow and peered into his face. I think I can swear to it that he was none other than Chief Ranger Marty."

The duke turned white with rage; he could not speak, he only muttered: "Is it possible! One of my own men!"

"As a proof to bear me out," the impetuous hireling continued, taking a handkerchief from his pocket in which the deer-head button was wrapped, "here is my evidence; it was torn off in the scuffle."

"All right! I'll see to it!" the old lord struggled to say. "You may go—leave that here! I'll make an example of the scamp, the hypocrite!"

The sub-ranger left. As he was stepping outside, the princess asked: "Did he fell many trees?"

"Sixteen, Your Grace! I went out this morning to look over the place and found no others touched."

"Were you injured in the scuffle?"

The young guard blushed. "Yes—no, Your Grace! The results were not what the desperate

man had intended. I was not injured, but the effects of the blow I will feel for at least a week."

"That will do." He left.

The princess looked at her husband anxiously. In the heat of anger he was accustomed to say and do things which he afterwards regretted. Moreover, all such excitement was injurious to his health.

"After all, it is not quite as bad as it looks," the prudent woman remarked. "The cut firs were left behind and the ranger was not injured. Who knows if perhaps he is not mistaken in the culprit."

After a moment she added: "Do you know what, William? Surely you will not allow this incident to rob you of the peace and blessing of Christmas; it is not of such importance. By and by you can investigate the story. The button, that ominous button,—let me have it."

He was about to object, but she interposed: "I promise you to keep it safely. But I do not want the trifle to bother you for the meantime."

The prince was reluctant in yielding. "Dear William," she pleaded, "to-day is my nameday; you will give me the button as a favor?"

Thereupon Adelheit took and hid it.

* * *

Marty had been alone half an hour, a prey to remorse of conscience, when quick, rapid steps were heard and his boy, his only son Frank, rushed in. He was about fourteen years of age, well

built and tall for his age, sound and solid, with dark sparkling eyes, red cheeks and graced like his father with a head of curly hair.

"Papa," he panted, holding up a large pocket-book, "I found this near the tavern. I had been helping the teacher to fix up the Christmas Tree at The Eagle, you know, in the hall, for next Sunday, and during the time there were five or six sleighs standing outside. The steward of the prince, the Mayor of Eibental, and a couple of mine-owners were sitting together in the wine-room. When they got ready to leave, the stable-boy asked me to help him hitch up the horses. I did so and after all the sleighs were gone I found this lying in the snow; I had stepped on it and no one saw me pick it up. So here it is—what else could I have done? To run after them was impossible, nor did I know to whom of them it belonged. Take it, papa."

The father took the big, heavy pocketbook and opened it. "It belongs to the ducal steward," he said calmly, while looking with astonishment at the bills of large denomination within the wallet.

"It's a heap of money," he observed.

"Money in the pocketbook, papa? Much money? Let me look at it, will you, papa?"

Mute with admiration the boy stared at the gold certificates snugly hiding in the pouch, numerous as pages in a prayer-book.

"The steward has collected the dues from the timber-merchants and wood-dealers of the city and was on his way to bring the money to his

master, the prince. He will be in terrible distress when he finds that it is gone."

"Papa, I'll run after him," cried Frank. "I'll make a short cut thru the woods and by the time he reaches the top of the big hill I'll be up with him—may I, papa?—and then he'll give me a reward! Let me go before mama comes back? The money ought to be returned right away, you know."

"Frank, you'll not overtake him by the time he reaches the hilltop."

"I'll run like a rabbit, papa; the snow isn't so deep in the woods. In case he is ahead, it is not improbable that he'll make a halt at the village Wildeck and you know beyond that is another steep hill which he must climb, during which time I will gain on him. Dear papa, please let me go!"

"Well then, in God's name!" the father replied. "Put on my fox-skin cap, it will keep you warm, and take a piece of bread along, and—go over to your mother's workbasket and bring me a few safety-pins. Thereupon he took the pocketbook and fastened it securely in the inside of his son's jacket. "You can't lose it now, so then—go—in God's name and try to be back before night."

The old woodman's clock pointed to three on the dial just as Frank was leaving the house. Like a shadow his tall figure passed the window and was gone.

"Maybe the good God has permitted this to happen," Martin mused; "maybe the duke will send

me a pardon in gratitude for the money my child is about to return. What I have endured up to now on account of my transgression seems punishment enough. Moreover, it was the first time I went astray, and as sure as God lives it will be the last."

In the meantime, Frank, like a fleetfooted deer, was after the sleigh, which drawn by a team of well-groomed horses over a smooth road went dashing along fast as the wind. Several times the boy screamed at the top of his voice to attract attention but the jingling of the sleighbells prevented the parties from hearing. The distance between the steward and his pursuer became constantly greater. Frank knew very well that on the road over the plain and thru the first half of the forest highway he could never overtake the steward; but beyond the woods where the steep rise began he had hopes to accomplish his purpose. By a bypath he would gain the many windings which the traveler in a slow trot uphill must cover. At last, at last, Frank had cleared the woods and was on rising ground. To make the short way, he had to climb the ascent where it was steepest and pick his steps over roots and logs between tree-stumps along a pathway that was difficult and dangerous. Luckily he was young and agile or he would have slipped and fallen many a time on the ice-covered ground. Laboriously and carefully he worked his way slowly upward. Occasionally he stopped and listened whether he could hear the sound of the speeding sleigh. He heard nothing.

A little later, however, the jingling of bells broke on his ear. He redoubled his efforts and with hands and feet he struggled to ascend the last bluff. He succeeded. As soon as he had gained the prominence he slid down on its farther side unto the main road which footed and passed it by, with the hope of hailing and stopping the onrushing sled. Alas! he was just about four or five minutes late; the vehicle on its polished runners had out-distanced him by a hundred yards and was dashing away faster and faster.

Poor Frank screamed as loud as possible. "Sir Steward, Sir Steward—stop—for heaven's sake, stop—money lost!"

The echo from the hills was the only response. The sleigh was gone for good. The boy stood in the middle of the road disconsolate. Valiantly he suppressed his tears while with moist eyes he strained to descry the faint outlines of the fast-disappearing sled. Recovering somewhat from the strenuous exertion, he patted his chest to feel if the pocketbook were still there, adjusted his fur-cap and mopped his wet brow.

He then proceeded on his way. A half-hour's tramp would bring him to Wildeck. Travelers were accustomed to stop at the village and rest up at The Stag Inn; no doubt the steward would do so likewise; he would certainly meet him there. Frank had reached the foot of the incline called The Gray Wall. This mighty watershed was traversed by an artificial serpentine road, very long and laborious. The boy was better acquaint-

ed with the old path which led across the Gray Wall on its lower levels. The undulations of this valley way were difficult at the time because in every nook and angle of it there were snowdrifts. The sturdy lad footed it, however; puffing mightily and covered with perspiration he came in sight of the village.

Surely the steward must have stopped there; it had several inns and was the seat of the Post Office. But if, as luck should have it, he missed him in Wildeck, his only alternative would be to climb the hill which by a long, steady, tortuous path led to the immense plateau beyond.

Frank reached the village, but neither a sled nor a wagon was to be seen. Like a lost orphan he stood on the bridge that spanned the creek. Night had set in.

The lone fourteen-year lad wept like a child.

Three hours already he had been on the way and all for nothing. The worst of it was that he had covered only half the way, if he intended to reach the residence of the prince at Oberlehnburg. His teeth closed with grim determination. "I'll do it; I'll not return home with the pocketbook," he said. Off he started on his endless tramp, along the inky creek and the somber trees on its bank, into the uncanny darkness of the narrow valley, where there was neither a house nor a light on the way to relieve the dread monotony of the night; a superstitious fear took possession of him; he listened, he looked sideways, he looked back, he was afraid of his own breath,

until finally he began to encourage himself by praying.

Onward, ever onward he went. After awhile he came to the mill at the crossroads and farther by a quarter of an hour, to a woodman's cottage. There was light in the rooms of the hut and the family was praying aloud. Half an hour brought him to Waldweiler. He was almost breathless. Walking down the principal street he saw the lighted Christmas Trees showing thru the windows and heard the happy children singing: "Holy Night" and "Adeste, Fideles." Oh! how he wished one of the villagers would invite him to his home to rest himself and would offer him a bite of food and a cup of coffee to warm his body quite chilled by this time. But no one saw the boy as he was struggling wearily thru the village street. Brrr! —he shook from head to foot and walked on.

The pall of night was resting on hill and dale. Luckily the bright stars and the white snow gave at least some light. Far below and beyond he saw the village of Eibental; of this he was certain from the many glittering lights in the place. A dozen rods still or so thru the forest, then two miles and a half of level road over the plain; after that he would face the last lap of his journey to Oberlehnburg. It was pitch dark in the woods. The trees sighed and rustled and cracked strangely and weirdly; he heard the howling of a fox in the distance. A dark wall of clouds that had been stationary in the southwestern sky was coming nearer and nearer. Frank had hardly got out of

the woods when a strong wind, the harbinger of the coming storm, seized him and hurled him to the ground. He arose slowly and plodded on.

Now it was that drops of rain struck his face, then snow began to fall silently, millions upon millions of flakes. He felt the weight of the mysterious fleece as it settled on his cap and clothes; its moisture was wetting him thru and thru. Altho freely perspiring he was chilled to the bone; his feet were like lumps of ice, he could hardly keep them moving.

He stumbled and nearly fell; again he stumbled and for a third time. Almost in despair, he stopped and looked around searchingly. Pitchy night was everywhere. Within a narrower horizon he saw nothing but dancing, whirling snowflakes. Not a tree, nor a house, not a sign-post to tell him where he was or to direct him whither to go.

The unfortunate boy was on the plains and had lost his way.

Loud and fervently he prayed for help. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name. Thy kingdom come," he sobbed as he stood in the snowstorm that night, "Thy Will be done." The rustling wind drowned the voice of the lad who praying and weeping, resumed his aimless walk to the right and to the left, anxiously seeking for traces of the road. He failed to notice that he was not advancing and that he was going from the right direction by an angle which led to a

small lateral valley thru which a branch of the principal road led.

While the lost boy, starved, frozen and exhausted, was straying thru the stormy night, fighting desperately for his life and with a last effort was winging to heaven the half-formulated words of another Our Father, the towns and villages were gay and noisy with the festivities of Christmas Eve. Countless waxen lights were illuminating hundreds of Christmas Trees, countless innocent hearts were overflowing with happiness, which their eyes and tripping tongues were striving to express. Delighted children in cities and hamlets were kneeling before the crib praying and singing, or were babbling joyfully about the beautiful things they had received. It was Holy Night, happy night, the most blessed night of the year, for then did Christ come down to give Himself to man.

But not a single child of the hundreds within the circuit had an intimation that a brave, poor boy, was fast succumbing to toil and exposure in the snow and weather.

* * *

As soon as Ursula returned, her husband the Chief Ranger told her what had happened. "Of the three of us, Frank will get the best Christmas gift this time," he remarked, "and one that he has merited himself. The wallet contained at least five or six thousand florins. For finding and

returning such an amount he ought to receive a handsome reward."

"So much—so unearthly much money," Ursula exclaimed, "and you permitted the boy to keep it in his possession and unprotected, to run after the sleigh! Supposing he is waylaid or he should lose it? Didn't you think of that at all?"

"The only thought in my mind at the time was this, that it was best to return the money to the prince as soon as possible."

Marty said no more. How could she divine what other motives had induced him to act as he did.

"If you could have accompanied him, it would have been all right," she replied; "as it is, the boy is running his legs off thru valleys and over mountains and I assure you he'll not overtake the steward. Christmas Eve he ought to spend with us at home. And now to think of it, to send him on a journey of eighteen miles to Oberlehnburg? My boy—over ice and snow—my darling boy, and who knows when he'll return or in what condition!"

"Why, it is only four o'clock as yet," the husband answered, "and Frank is fourteen years old; in fact, for intelligence and endurance he'll equal a lad of sixteen; I am not anxious about him. He is agile and fleet as a deer; the money is safe with him and will be safely handed to the owner. Many a time I have watched him on an errand to the drugstore for people and saw him return quicker than I expected. He'll be back in good

time, and believe me, with a reward of ten florins, not less, you'll see."

Marty himself was not too firm in believing what he said; he spoke as he did to console his wife. In his own mind he felt sorry now that he had sent the boy upon so hazardous a chase and at a time of the year when the days were so cold and short.

Evening approached; it became darker and darker in the house and Frank had not yet returned. Husband and wife were very anxious and talked only of their son. Six, seven, eight o'clock struck. The Christmas candles in the village houses had been lighted and extinguished. The people were retiring for the night in order to be ready and on time for the Midnight Mass. The village was silent as death.

The Chief Ranger and Ursula had ceased talking. Their throats and hearts were constricted with fear and anxiety. The possibility of every imaginable fortune or misfortune that might have befallen their son was weighed as it passed thru their minds. Questions of all kinds arose, clamorous for an answer. Where is Frank now? Did he overtake the steward? Has anything happened to him? Did he slip and fall on the dangerous upland paths? Is he lying helpless somewhere in the forest with a broken leg? Maybe even now he is calling for help and there is no one near by to hear! Who knows he may have been attacked or robbed or murdered!

"Dear God, tell us that Francis our child is safe!" was the mute appeal ascending to heaven from the hearts of the parents.

There was no relief for their agony.

"It's beginning to snow," Ursula remarked with a hollow voice, "and the wind is rising! My poor boy!"

"Listen!" Marty exclaimed. "I heard a noise outside."

More than a dozen times the mother opened the window and looked out into the stormy night and listened. No sign of her child. Ten o'clock struck. Unable to control her agonized feelings any longer, Ursula screamed out aloud and sobbed: "My boy, my only son, adrift in the snow, lying injured in the woods, freezing and dying and no one to help him!" She wept and lamented, wrung her hands and tore her hair in heartrending grief.

Marty's fortitude could not withstand this scene. He began to weep also. "It was my fault," he groaned, "I permitted him to go; it's a punishment for my sins—my poor, innocent boy!"

Thereupon he related to his wife his transgression of the past week, what led up to it, and its probable results. "This is a punishment already," he exclaimed, "for my misdeeds!"

His wife was mute during the recital of the sorry story. When he had finished she went to the sleeping room, and after fingering around a little while in the dark, she came out with a small hand-satchel which she placed on the table. Then turn-

ing to the Crucifix she prayed loud and earnestly: "My God, I was attached, too much attached, to this money which I had put by for my son Frank. See here the sum total of my savings; take it, is is Thine; but oh! send back my boy to me sound and whole! Day after to-morrow I'll send Dores all the money I have; and this very night after the Mass I will call on the priest and tell him all; he will write to the prince and beg mercy for my husband. He will make a good Confession,—you'll do it, Marty, will you not?"—she interrupted her prayer and when he nodded consent, she continued: "as soon as he is on his feet again, and he promises never to offend Thee in this way anymore. For every fir he cut he will pay the priest who will send the money to the prince. Moreover, he has resolved henceforth to serve his Master faithfully and honestly."

While Marty was sobbing during this extempore prayer of his wife, she addressed herself with firm confidence to the Blessed Mother of God: "Holy Mother, this very night the Son of God, thy son, was born, and by His birth brought thee ineffable joy. Who can tell the happiness thou didst feel in watching over and caring for Him in the crib during this blessed night! Surely, then, thou wilt not permit that my child perish of cold in the snow. Guide him homeward! In recollection of thy own distress on this night when thou wert compelled to wander from door to door in quest of a lodging, lead my boy to a secure shelter. Beseech thy Divine Child in the crib to

protect my boy. For three days thou didst seek thy Son sorrowing when he was lost in Jerusalem; regard the agony of thy poor servants, my husband and myself, and bring back our only son!"

Then she knelt down and recited the Rosary with Marty. Especially, fervent was their prayer when they came to the third mystery: "The Birth of the Savior in Bethlehem."

The old wall-clock struck eleven. "I thought I heard a noise," Ursula said. "'Tis the wind," Marty replied. She opened the window. "A sleigh is coming." At first he shook his head incredulously, but he was soon convinced. There was indeed a sleigh approaching; the jingling of the bells was becoming plainer. In a wild gallop the horses had reached and were about to pass the cottage.

"Halt, halt!" a clear ringing voice exclaimed. "That's the place!" "It's Frank, Frank—Marty, it's Frank!" Ursula shouted rushing to the door; "it is Frank, thanks be to God!"

The sleigh stopped and the party threw off their robes and furs and stepped out. "But where is Frank?" Madam Ursula asked concerned. Hardly had she put the question when her son stood before her. She did not know him at once dressed as he was in a new stylish over-coat. He had been brought home by a driver from Oberlehnburg in the steward's sleigh with a lively team in the harness. "He can laugh now," the sleighman remarked pointing to the boy;

"but on the way hither he slept like a badger in his den, and no wonder; still it was better so than to have fallen asleep on the bleak meadows on such a night."

While the ducal servant who had accompanied the boy, was carrying all kinds of Christmas gifts into the house, the driver related to Ursula the adventures of her son. After traveling thru the snow for five hours he had lost his way on the big meadow, to which fact he owed his safety and his life. For it happened that the young heir of the duke and his lady whose castle was some miles distant, were on their way at a late hour to visit and spend Christmas Eve with the old princely couple. Crossing the open field they heard the loud prayers and agonizing calls of Frank who was in the last stage of exhaustion. They picked him up and took him along.

"To the Castle?" Ursula asked breathlessly. "Of course, what other place was there? They received him kindly in the residence. Her Grace looked after the boy herself. But I must stop; Frank will tell you the particulars. I must return as soon as possible."

The parents listened to their child with open mouths and dilated eyes. "I was blinded and could neither see nor stand," the son related, "when they lifted me from the sled. I was stiff from the cold. They helped me into the room and supported me or I would have fallen. My boots had thick soles of ice. The young heir—I didn't know at the time it was he—asked me

from where I came; as much as I tried I couldn't speak a word; the young princess noticing this said; 'Hurry and bring the child a warm drink!'

"Just then the duchess Adelheit came in. She asked no questions at all.

"Take the boots off the boy!" she commanded. 'His clothes are iced thru and thru, put him to bed.' To this I managed to reply: Not to bed, but take me to the steward! 'What do you want with the steward?' the aged princess asked and laughed. I wanted to answer but at that very moment I was so shaken with a chill that I could not. A maid then handed me something in a glass—it looked red and was steaming hot, 'Drink,' she said, 'it will do you good!' The stuff was so sharp, however, that when I drank, it burnt my throat and went to my nose, so that I had to sneeze and cough.

"Some one asked me: 'Would you rather have a cup of tea?' 'Or a cup of coffee?' the princess added. I answered to the last question, 'Yes.'

"They brought me another cup of something warm, after which I again begged to be taken to the steward. The princess laughed again and said: 'You cannot go to the steward to-night anymore?'

"The steward will gladly receive me,' I replied, 'if he finds out that I have the pocketbook which he lost. Here it is!' Thereupon I tried to open my jacket but I could not, it was frozen stiff. For the third time they gave me a hot drink. The

good princess then told me that she would call for the steward but that in the meantime I must take off my clothes.

"The rest I didn't hear, nor what they did to me nor planned about me. It was a nice soft bed they put me into with a hot water bottle at my feet, in a beautiful room. Everything before my eyes went around in a ring but at last I fell asleep. In a little while I opened my eyes and begged: 'I must see the steward and then hurry home.' The cook laughed at me for that. I wanted to get up—but how could I? my clothes were gone.

"'It will take at least three days to thaw them out,' she said, 'be glad that you are in a warm bed. You will have other clothes when you get up.'

"Finally I was allowed to leave the bed and dress myself in the new suit. On the table I saw the large pocketbook. Someone had taken it out of my jacket and placed it there. The aged princess asked me about it and I told her where I had found it and what it contained. She asked me many questions and I answered them all."

The mother and father of Frank listened without saying a word. At last Marty in a low voice ventured to ask: "Did the princess say anything about me?"

"And about me?" Ursula added.

"After looking at the pocketbook the princess went out and shortly after the old prince came into the room. He asked me my name, from

where I came, who my parents were, and made me tell him exactly when and where I found the money. 'Did you know,' he inquired, 'that there was so much money in the wallet?' 'No,' I answered, 'but I showed it to my father and he opened it.'

"Did he see the money?" 'Of course!' I replied. 'He took out a whole bundle of bills; naturally I saw them.' 'Did not the thought come to your mind that you could use the money as well as the owner?' I answered quickly: 'Oh, yes, I thought a couple of the bills would come handy!' 'Did you not think,' the prince asked again, 'that since you found the money you had a right to it?'

I thought he was joking, he had such a queer look about him and nearly burst out laughing as I shook my head. The prince still went on: 'Did your father really give you the pocketbook right away without taking out a single bill which he might claim as the finder's reward?' I looked in his face sternly and said: 'My father doesn't steal; he is an honest man.' "

Poor Marty's heart beat like a trip-hammer the while he covered his face with his hands.

Frank was astonished and frightened at his father. Ursula divertingly remarked: "He is overcome probably by a sudden pain; just continue. You did fine, as you promised your father you would."

The boy continued: "One thing the prince was especially insistent to know, namely, whether you,

dear papa, commanded that I should run after the steward immediately, in order to return the money to him at once.

“ ‘He did, I replied, for it was papa who pinned the pocketbook in my jacket that I might not lose it.’ The princely couple spoke together for a while after that, I couldn’t understand a word that was said. What bothered me during this long delay was my desire to see the steward; I was also anxious to get home as soon as possible. Finally I began to cry aloud and I told them why.

“To quiet me the princess said: ‘Frank, don’t be uneasy; the steward will have you brought home in his sleigh, you have well-deserved it; you will be with your father and mother before twelve. The cook has prepared you a meal; while eating you can talk to the steward and tell him all you know.’ Accordingly, I ate as much as I could, after which I felt better.

“When the steward came I gave him the pocket-book; he counted the bills and found none missing. My whole trip and how I tried to catch up with him, was gone over. He could hardly believe that I had walked the whole way to the great plain. All in the castle were good to me and praised me. The prince asked me what I wanted to be when grown up. ‘A Game Keeper.’ ‘If you really mean it, I will see that your wish is fulfilled. You are a smart and quick lad and will make a good Game Keeper and forester.’

"Papa, Mama, see—that's what I got for Christmas. I'm going to be a hunter, a hunter!"

The ranger, his wife and son, received many gifts from the castle; they were lying in a pile upon the table.

"Oh, yes!" Frank suddenly exclaimed. "I almost forgot this!"

From the pocket of his overcoat he fetched forth an envelope. "The prince gave me this, it is my reward; you should save it for me."

It was a Fifty-Florin bill.

The surprise at such a handsome gift had hardly subsided, when the boy drew from his pocket a second envelope: "This is for you, papa."

"For me?" Marty replied with fear and trembling.

"Here it is! The princess told me to hand it to you; it's something you have lost."

"The princess?" Marty exclaimed in trepidation, opening the little box. He unwrapped the tissue paper carefully and lo! in the palm of his hand blinking at him mischievously, lay the lost brass button. A note enveloping read: "For thirty years you have been an honest man; you have again proved yourself such to-day; I am confident that you will continue so to the end of your life." This note was signed by Princess Adelheit. An addendum followed: "A boy as honest and brave as Frank cannot have a dishonest man for father. May God prosper you and yours!"

The happy family of the ranger had just time enough to look over the presents and read the letter, when the bells rang joyously and solemnly for Midnight Mass. Ursula and Frank assisted at the Holy Sacrifice in church, Marty was present in spirit; filled with amazement and gratitude, they thanked the Divine Child and the Blessed Mother for the favors received.

Out of the Mouth of a Child

Miss Beatrice was in tears.

Seemingly there was no reason for her to weep.

Outdoors the snowflakes were tumbling dizzyly from the winter skies, the storm was howling, icicles were hanging from the roof, and the fountain in the yard was bound and disfigured with grotesque decorations of snow and ice; its murmuring, gurgling song had ceased. Indoors, however, in the bay-room of the house, it was cozy and cheerful. A rich carpet covered the floor and a bearskin rug lay sprawling in front of the writing-desk. The table, the sofa, the chairs, the fancy sewing-table in the alcove, the bookcase, the corner pedestals supporting large, luxuriant potted ferns and exotics with white and red clusters, back of which and partly hidden by them, gold-feathered, loud-warbling canaries in gilded cages were gracefully

swinging,—were proof one and all, that Miss Beatrice did not belong to the class that must toil and slave for a living. The lady, that is Miss Beatrice Thalbach, was by no means an old maid, she was scarcely thirty; in fact, judging from her fresh handsome face, her wealth of blond hair, her tall, mobile figure, it were safer to place her age at twenty-five. Surely there was little reason, then, for her tears.

Nevertheless she was weeping.

An elderly Religious dressed in a black habit and white veil sat opposite her. After a pause the nun began: "It were better you would relate all that is on your mind. It would give you relief and maybe we would find that the case is not quite as hopeless as you think." There was comfort in the very voice of the calm, sympathetic speaker. The lady raised her head and wiped her eyes.

"Pardon me, aunt," she replied, "I ought not to give way to my feelings as I do, still how can I help it! My brother is incorrigible; I have tried everything but without the least success. During the past five years—what have I not done to bring him to a better state of mind. In every letter I have besought, entreated, warned, conjured him to return to his holy Religion; face to face I argued with him for hours at a time; I sent him the best books I could find that he might instruct himself; begged his friends to influence him and to put him in the way of meeting some of the most learned and renowned fathers of the

Benedictine and Jesuit Orders—he hardly deigned to converse with them. John is an unbeliever and will remain one; he pities and scoffs at me."

"It was not futile, that which you have done, dear Beatrice," the Religious answered; "John has had a good bringing up and if you have not already moved him, you will sooner or later touch a responsive chord in his heart."

"No, Aunt Monica, no," the lady tearfully exclaimed; "it is this exactly, the hopelessness of his case, which made it so hard for mama to die and has brought me almost to despair. John was to be sent to the Jesuit boarding school at Feldkirch, a college attended by the sons of the best families of the Province. Just as everything was ready for the boy to start who was delighted at the prospect, an uncle unfortunately intervened and prevailed upon mama to change her plans. If papa had been living this would never have happened. The uncle, however, who was much at Court and a great favorite of the Prime Minister, acted like a man bereft of reason when he heard that John, the heir of Thalbach, was to be sent to the Jesuits.

"Understand," the courtier said to mama, "that in case he goes to Feldkirch, John need never reckon to be employed in the service of the State. And least of all will he ever be invited to Court or be offered a position in the Diplomatic Service; even if he returns equipped with the knowledge of the Seven Wise Men—he will remain forever isolated. Among the nobility he will be looked at

askance; especially, if ever he ventures to seek a bride among the highborn, will he receive the cold shoulder. Jesuitical is ultramontane, and ultramontane is black, and black is the color of death, not that of life and of a roseate future. Moreover, their system of Morals is lax and loose."

"May God forgive the misguided man!" the nun whispered, as Beatrice continued: "This is how it came about that mama broke the solemn promise she had made papa on his deathbed—to make it easier for her only son to get along in the world she imagined—and sent him to the High School in the Capital. No doubt he learnt a great deal at this school but barely a word of Religion. As a consequence, when mama came to die, she left a son who was an unbeliever; he had lost the last vestige of faith at the University. The terrible responsibility weighing upon her forced her to pray, to plead, to cry out night and day that John would return to his holy Church, that if he did not, he and she would be lost forever."

"It is awful, dear Beatrice; now I understand—"

"In her last sickness I watched by mama many weeks; to me alone she confided the cause of her anguish: I consoled her and said that by my prayers I would try to reclaim John. Noticing that this did not satisfy her, I, to ease her soul, promised and swore that my one task would be to save my brother; that I would sacrifice my happiness and stay my plans for life, till I saw him

again contrite in church and on his knees in prayer. Upon this pledge she was somewhat reassured and so she died. And mama holds me to my word, for she told me on the last night of her life, that if I ever disregarded it, she would come back from her grave to remind and chide me."

"That is expecting a great deal, a great deal, indeed," the Religious observed; "the sacrifice your mother demands of you is too heavy in my opinion."

"That may be, but I was the first to propose it," Beatrice replied. "If you had seen mama in her frenzied terror you would have promised even more. It is true, I did not realize at the time how onerous the assumed obligation would become. My brother loves me and is reputed a good man—on this one point, however, he is cold and unresponsive as a block of ice."

"The grace of God, my child, can warm what is cold, and soften what is obdurate; His grace must and will help him. Admonitions and arguments are of little avail in dealing with a soul blinded as your brother's; and seldom if ever will the books of even the best and deepest thinkers restore holy faith when it is lost. Knowledge is good and desirable but all the wisdom of the world is not faith nor the mother of faith, otherwise the poor and illiterate would be poorly off. Just as men with all their science cannot produce even a single blade of grass, so with all their knowledge they cannot beget or implant holy faith in the human heart. The grace of God

alone can do that. To know and to believe are not synonymous. Knowledge is human, faith is divine. The former is acquired by study and experience and is fallible, the latter comes from God directly and is therefore founded upon an adamantine rock. What you have heretofore tried and done was useful insofar as it made John more or less amenable to the grace of God, but of themselves human means cannot purchase faith for him or anyone. God alone can do what you are unable to bring about, and because that very God is your God, you must with a filial trust beseech Him to enlighten the mind and soften the heart of your brother. Prayer, fervent, persevering prayer, will obtain for him again the gift of faith."

"But, oh, dear Aunt Monica, how much I have prayed already, how many Masses have I had said, and all to no purpose!"

"God will not force His grace upon any one; he has endowed man with a free will to accept or to reject His mercy. But for all that your prayers have not been in vain; God has heard your every sigh and petition and in His own good time will answer them. Do not lose patience and especially, do not cease praying. Moreover, if you like you can make your prayer still more effective—"

"In what way, aunt?" Beatrice eagerly inquired.

"You know as well as I,—by sacrifice. It is a harsh word, one that grates on the ear. Now

that is a sacrifice, to do which costs us suffering; which, so to speak, forces the tear from our eye and the blood from our hearts; an act, the doing of which costs a part of our very selves. It is the throbbing victim self-immolated whose prayers God cannot withstand."

At the last words Beatrice bowed her head and folded her hands. Her comely face took on a solemn mien. In this meditative posture she continued even after her aunt had left.

Spring has come. Beatrice in a reflective mood is sitting in her comfortable room with brimming eyes. What had caused her to weep so often during the past months? Why is she weeping to-day, when all nature is exulting at the coming of its floral queen. May is scattering leaves and buds and blossoms profusely over shrub and bush and tree. The air is heavy with the fragrance of apple-blossoms; finches, robins and canaries are warbling jubilantly from morning till night. The fountain in the yard is gurgling in liquid notes while the children are dancing and playing around it in riotous joy.

A letter postmarked from a foreign land, which Beatrice has just finished reading, explains it all. There was neither title, nor close, nor signature, to a sonnet written with an unsteady hand, which formed the body of the missive. The poem "A Last Farewell" follows:

The quick or languid eye is charmed to see
The nascent verdancy on plain and hill;

The ear, to hear the thrush, the lark, the linnet
 thrill,
When Spring is regnant over land and sea.

Nor stinted the jocund youth his transient glee,
To hunt the woods and field, to fish the rill.
The rich, the poor, may sate themselves at will
With gifts, impartial gen'rous Spring leaves
 free.

To me howe'er, a boon that crowns them all
Spring gave: he filled my heart with am'rous
 joy,
With love the first I knew and pure withal;
Then quick he snatched from me the maiden
 coy,
And o'er my dead love spread the sable pall.
O cruel, fickle Spring! to give and then destroy!

Beatrice with head inclined was staring fixedly at the last lines on the page while her eyes were streaming with tears. After a while she got up and drew down the blinds so that the room was almost dark; the canary was frightened and stopped singing. Then she went over to the sofa in the corner above which an oil-painting of a beautiful woman hung. It was the picture in a gorgeous frame of her mother looking down upon her. With clasped, uplifted hands the daughter addressed the picture: "O mother, mother, what a burden you have placed upon me! O mother, it is too heavy, I cannot bear it!"

Overcome with grief she sank to the sofa and buried her head in the pillow. Intense anguish was gnawing and tearing at her heart—anguish because her happiness for life had been destroyed.

She had known the highminded, knightly baron most favorably for a long time and therefore when several weeks ago he had come pleading for her hand, she was confident if she consented he would make her happy. But unfortunately between him and her happiness, stood John, the unbelieving brother. The sophisms of the world and a false science had robbed him of his faith and of his right to heaven. To bring back to the Church the blinded, self-willed man, was the task the daughter had assumed at her mother's deathbed. She had promised to think of nothing, to do nothing, no matter how near and dear to her own happiness, until this was achieved. It was her firm belief that if she would accept the baron then and there, she would break the pledge she had given her mother, the recollection of which would haunt her to the end of her life. Her peace of mind would be destroyed by the constant fear that the angry ghost warning and menacing, of her deceased parent, would confront her.

Accordingly, she sent away the noble suitor, grieved and disappointed. Her decisive "No" gave him no grounds for future hope, altho the word was uttered with a blanched face and trembling lips. Neither was there much comfort for him in her avowal that she would never

marry nor in the covert allusion that if she were so inclined he would be her ideal of a husband. But tho they parted in sorrow, they parted as friends.

A few days later the baron informed Beatrice that he had joined an expedition on its way to explore Africa and would be gone for several years. The sonnet was his last farewell.

It had riven her heart. With whom was she to share her grief? In a matter so tender and personal she was loathe to make even her aunt, Sister Monica, a confidante.

Night had come. The nightingale was warbling his amorous plaint on a tree in the garden and Beatrice found herself kneeling before a picture of The Crucified; she offered to God her lacerated heart, her earthly happiness, as a sacrifice for the conversion of her brother. The prayer quieted her and brought peace to her soul.

Next morning the maid in plaiting the rich, golden hair of her mistress, was astonished and frightened to notice that among the blond tresses there were strands of gray, and that her face had lost its freshness and taken on an air of lassitude marked with deep resignation.

The summer had come, the sultry summer of that calamitous year, when by official decree the Religious were expelled from Germany. Hardly three years had elapsed since the Franco-German war when hundreds of thousands of Catholics were fighting side by side with their Protestant

countrymen against a common enemy, and hundreds of Religious of both sexes were nursing the sick and the dying on the battlefields and in the field-hospitals; and now in collusion with the Government, all hell was loosed against them, against bishops and priests, against monks and nuns, many of whom had but shortly before been publicly praised and decorated for their heroism; suddenly stigmatized as undesirable, as enemies of their country, they were robbed of their rights and banished. Catholic Germany bitterly resented this black ingratitude of the North. Outraged in what was nearest and dearest to them, the people interpellated the Ministers thru their Representatives, sent in protest after protest, and in every possible way showed how they execrated the so-called justice of the imperial clique.

Altho it was already evening, a scorching sun was still sending down its withering rays to the earth, on a certain day in August of this disastrous year. Miss Beatrice weeping was standing at the window looking out, just as a man was leaving the castle grounds in a handsome chaise. Between mountainous clouds the blazing sun shone upon equipage and driver and the whirl of dust which the fast-trotting horses were raising.

The man was her brother John. Unexpectedly he had returned from the Capital that afternoon and after curtly greeting his sister he asked: "In the papers I have seen your name signed to a protest against the official decrees now in effect.

Is that correct?" Beatrice taken aback by the gruff question, answered simply that by affixing her name she wished merely to express her sympathy for the persecuted Religious and nothing more.

"Indeed, and wasn't that enough!" he sharply retorted. Then he began to lecture her about her imprudence and sentimentalities which he charged were causing him difficulties and injuring his prospects. When, dumbfounded, she met his remonstrances with the query whether he expected her to abet the enemies of the Church, he briskly interrupted her by insisting that she mind her business; that as she was ignorant of the causes which underlay the new laws it was her part to keep mum and hold herself strictly aloof.

Finally they got into a hot argument in which she confronted him with facts concerning the brutality of the persecutors, to all of which he simply replied that as she understood nothing at all about the matter, it was her duty and his will that she hold her peace. Led on by the altercation he went on to say, that residing in the country for years had made her one-sided, crotchety and peculiar; that it was high time for her to move to the city, for rumor had it she was even losing her mind.

Thereupon Beatrice got up and facing him boldly, demanded what he meant to imply by his brutal insinuation.

Stroking his side-whiskers which were style at the time, he coldly replied; "Well then, if you wish to know—all right. No doubt something so personal is your own affair; nevertheless, as your brother, I have a right to express my opinion. Understand my allusion then, as referring to the offer of marriage made you by Baron X."

A stream of blood shot to her face and there was a strange gleam in her eyes as she answered with a low, vibrant voice: "It seems to me that is an affair exclusively between the baron and myself."

"I would simply like to know why you have refused him. The baron is every inch of him, a man of honor; had you accepted him you would have allied our family to one of the highest and best in the land and on your part would have made a most brilliant marriage. There are at least three dozen Madams hankering after his money, every one of whom is socially high above Miss Beatrice von Thalbach. He is an imposing man with a spotless record; he is a Christian, in fact, he is an Ultramontane. This gentleman, one out of a thousand, came to you as a suitor, and instead of thanking God on your knees for your opportunity, you gave him the cold shoulder and made yourself the laughingstock of the world! What can I make of all this? How am I to explain it, Beatrice? Does it not argue a lack of thought or sense? Either you have had a reason or you have had none for such strange behavior. If you have had a reason it must be one that shuns the light!"

"John!" Beatrice screamed.

"Well then, if you have acted without a reason you have given the clearest proof that you are incapable of looking after your own welfare."

Beatrice uttered a groan, and in a half-swoon sank to her chair. "I am now convinced," the brother relentlessly continued, "that in future I must look after you more closely. You will not find it strange then—"

"If you appoint a guardian over your own sister," she finished with bitterness.

Her face was pale as death and her dark eyes encircled with red lines, were ablaze. She controlled herself, however, as she looked her brother straight in the eye, who to avoid the stare turned his head. "John," she said with a calm, defiant voice, "this affair concerns me, and me only, but this much I will disclose to you, upon my word of honor I can assure you I have acted with a good conscience. What the gossips of high or low degree may say about it, I cannot hinder if I would and am therefore not responsible for their comments. I insist upon it that in future in speaking to me you pass this subject by—it is the only favor I ask of you."

"We are thru then," he answered. In this mood sister and brother parted. From the window she was watching the rising, veering cloud of dust in the wake of the vehicle, scattered by the wind. Then putting on her rain-cloak she went out. While the thunderstorm was passing over the castle and the village adjacent, she knelt in the

little chapel lost in fervent prayer. The pale lightning flashes, the peals of thunder did not disturb her; the commotion within her was more violent than that of the skies. But Beatrice von Thalbach was a woman of strong will. Even tho her soul was the battle ground of fierce contending passions and her heart was torn and lacerated by the suspicions and ingratitude of a heartless brother, she again offered to God more irrecovably than ever, the sacrifice of her temporal happiness for his salvation.

Ten years have gone by; millions of hearts are rejoicing for it is Christmas Eve.

Beatrice von Thalbach is on her deathbed. The dread summons had come to her suddenly. It is true that the sacrifice she had so heroically borne during the past decade had made deeper inroads upon her health than even her closest friends surmised; then, too, there were many other sufferings besides, which unknown to others had helped to bring her down and sap her life's strength. A slight cold had attacked her which rapidly developed into pneumonia; Christmas Eve the priest administered to her the Last Sacraments and prepared her for her passage into eternity.

It was impossible to bring her brother to her bedside even by telegraph; he would have been too late. She knew this, altho it was her ardent wish to see him once more. Her last words were for him; her last prayer, her last anxiety for John who was still outside holy Church.

Had her sacrifice been of no avail? She was tortured with terrible doubts, but never for a moment did she lose confidence in God. With the last remnant of strength she folded her trembling hands and dying, uttered the words: "Dear God, send my Guardian Angel to bring back my brother to the faith of his childhood!"

* * *

John von Thalbach was sitting upon a sumptuous divan in the parlor of his residence; Madam Thalbach and the three youngest children were with him. Upon a massive table a huge Christmas Tree was standing ablaze with lights and varicolored baubles and toys and gifts of all kinds. Gleefully the children were dancing around the tree, with their admiring eyes fixed on the many beautiful things pendent from its branches.

The father was quietly observing their rapturous delight; anyone, however, could see that he neither shared nor entered into the spirit of the occasion.

He had no cares; his position and station in life were brilliant; money he had in abundance; the children were polite and devoted to him, his wife obedient to his beck and call; the family was sound and healthy—there was nothing wanting to his earthly happiness.

And yet he felt ill at ease. There was a void somewhere. He sighed. Ah! the golden days of early youth were passing before him; in those days he prayed to the Infant Jesus, tasted happy-

ness such as he had never experienced since. A longing for the irrevocable days filled his heart. He was well aware that it was faith and grace alone which had caused this joy—he had discarded them long ago. It would be wrong however, to imagine that he was still as radical as ten years ago; not at all, for he had had many a bitter disillusionment in the meantime; his eyes had been partly opened; he was more liberal now in his views and language. To-night he felt disturbed. The joy of his children and their gratitude was touching, of course, but still there was something wanting. When he was small, parents and children would assemble around the Christmas Tree and sing the old inimitable songs: "Holy Night!" "Adeste, Fideles!" and others; and finally there was the solemn, central solemnity of all, the Midnight Mass.

But these things are of the past. An indefinable uneasiness is the result of the void they have left. Reminiscences of other Christmas Eves are uppermost in his mind as he listlessly watches his children gamboling about the tree.

Just then there was a little noise outside the door; the Madam went to investigate. In a little while she returned to the room and told her husband that a poor girl about ten years weeping loudly, had been found at the gate by the butler. She was from the vicinity. The father of the little child had died years ago, its mother was in the hospital. Lonely, sad and frightened, it had left the dark, cold room, where it lived and slept,

to seek companionship on the street. The sight of the many happy children in warm, lighted homes, dancing around the Christmas Tree, had made her cry. Thereupon the butler took the girl into the kitchen and asked her if she wanted anything to eat. The Madam had hardly finished relating the above when the lord, her husband commanded: "Bring her in!"

A minute later, the little girl was in the room; she was shivering from the cold and her cheeks were wet with tears. The eyes of the gracious lady grew moist with compassion when she saw the frail child and the poor dress it wore.

The children of the family surrounded the orphan and plied her with many questions. When they learnt that she had received for Christmas not even an apple or a nut, in fact, nothing at all, and that her room was without light and fire, they were emulous of one another to share their gifts with her. They begged their mother to help the girl.

"Yes," said she, "for Christmas, your little guest shall receive new shoes and a new suit of warm clothes."

Then they led the girl to the big table upon which the mighty Christmas Tree stood. With wondering eyes the child gazed at the magic tree as if she were looking into heaven. Gradually her face was transfigured; in sheer amazement she became oblivious of her surroundings and folding her hands she unconsciously as if she were praying uttered these words: "Fear not, for

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behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. The grace of God our Savior hath appeared to all men instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. Amen."

It was the orphan's prayer of thanksgiving and at the same time an avowal of her happiness. The Scriptural words the child had memorized at school; lost in what to it was a scene of ravishing bliss and overpowered by its emotions, it recited the message with the force and vehemence of a glorified soul.

With intense silence the family listened to the child's prayer. The lord especially was moved even to tears when he noticed the ecstatic gaze of the frail girl in whose dilated eyes the glare of the Christmas candles was reflected, and when he observed with what reverence and piety his children harkened to her message.

Unable to control himself any longer he got up and exclaimed: "You have spoken wonderfully well, my child!" He approached and kissed it on

its forehead. "Take the kiss as given to you by your Father in heaven!" he said.

The little girl was overwhelmed with gifts and was permitted to stay in the house until her mother came back from the hospital. To-night for the first time in many years Sir John von Thalbach was present at the Midnight Mass with his wife and children. Before the crib he began a new life—with the grace of God he had returned to Holy Church.

It was exactly at the same hour his sister Beatrice upon her deathbed had completed her sacrifice. By the glare of the blessed candle the last tears that welled from her eyes shone and sparkled on her waxen cheeks; if she had only known, her last tears would have been tears of joy.

The Christmas Gift of Wettingen

“Dear God, the time of Advent has come again, that beautiful, that devotional season, when it is easy to pray, when the soul with joyful longing looks forward to Christmas, to adore the Divine Infant in the crib, to greet and to bless Mary the Mother of God and Joseph her spouse! For the first time to-morrow morning, the faithful will sing, ‘O ye heavens, rain Him down,’ and the jubilant song, ‘Up, my soul, rejoice and sing.’ I too will join in the hymns, to glorify and thank Thee, my God, for the gift of faith which has brought me such peace and happiness. Dear God, and thou, O Blessed Mother, protect me against worldliness and all attachment to earthly things! May this holy season make me better. I promise to keep it well.”

This was the substance of the prayer uttered, inaudibly of course, by a maiden kneeling at dusk on a certain day in the side-chapel of the parish-church.

She had just been to Confession and had prolonged her thanksgiving till nearly everyone had gone. The few worshipers who still tarried in the church were acquainted with the girl and not surprised at her fervor. Every one knew that she had always been an innocent, pious child, with

the soul of a Nathanael, artless and guileless, who in her simplicity thought every youth and maiden at least as virtuous as herself and considered as very ordinary her deep love for prayer.

After a little while, Miss Clara Riede, that was her name, got up and left the church. So recollected was she on her way thru the churchyard and down the street homeward on this foggy Saturday evening, that she took no notice of any one. Softly she was humming a tune, the words of which an attentive listener close to her might have caught:

“As the dove in its flight,
On and upward will strain,
Until it find safety and rest;
Doth my soul with its might
Strive the portal to gain
Which ope’s to the home of the blest.”

At the public square where a gilt-framed picture of the Blessed Virgin above the transom directed attention to the drugstore “Mary-Help,” she turned the corner and entered an old patrician house by a side door.

“At last, at last, Clara!” the mother exclaimed as her daughter stepped into the room. “A person would think you made a General Confession three times over of your whole life. Aunt Mina is waiting for you a half-hour already. Entertain her, I must get supper ready.”

A slight displeasure blended with innocent mischief mantled the fair comely face of Clara, as she greeted her aunt while taking off her hat and wraps.

"Clara, Clara," the woman said smiling, holding up her finger deprecatingly, "did the sexton have to sweep you out of the church again? You so young, so handsome, to be so strangely and excessively pious!"

Clara stopped her ears; but the aunt continued; "I have nothing against piety and am pious myself, still too much is too much, and remember you have a long time ahead of you yet for praying."

The young girl laughed at the last remark: "dear aunt, you do not mean to say that you have become pious only now at your age?"

"Child, don't try any stupid witticisms on me, your aunt and godmother!" the woman answered somewhat offended. "Moreover, I am not quite as old as your expression, "at your age" would lead one to infer."

"Pardon me, Aunt Mina, I did not mean anything by it; I know that you intend well with me; but on the other hand, I did not spend as much time in church as you think, in spite of the fact too, that Advent—"

"The Advent season is here, yes, yes; I will not keep you from church; real piety which is governed as to time and place is praiseworthy. The proverb says: 'Piety is of benefit to every state of life,' and let me add, to the state of marriage

likewise, do you hear me, Clara?"

"I do, dear aunt, but those words are not found in the Sacred Scriptures."

"What of it. If the proverb says 'To every state,' surely it includes the married state also."

"I agree with you, dear aunt, that a married woman ought to be especially pious."

"That's true too; but you did not exactly understand me. What I meant to say was this: A girl as pious as you has a right to expect that God will send her a good husband."

"Aunt Mina, I have never as yet entertained such a thought. I would be ashamed—"

"Do you wish perhaps to give me a lesson in propriety, child? I know very well what is proper. You, however, live from day to day without a thought of the future, leaving it to God and your aunt to look out for you."

Clara could not help laughing. "In that case my interests are very well attended to and I can face the future without care."

"What am I to understand by those words?"

The maiden turned her beautiful dark eyes on her aunt and replied earnestly and deliberately: "Aunt Mina, I have no thought of bowing to the marital yoke and no desire either. My present condition is perfectly satisfactory. I find it so charming to be young, healthy and free, the world seems to me so beautiful, I am so happy with my parents, that I cannot bear even the thought of marriage."

"There it is, that's what I expected!" the woman exclaimed. "Every one believes you so pious and now you speak like a real lightminded damsel of the world. Aren't you afraid to speak so flippantly?"

"Dear aunt, it is just as I have often told you, namely, that you think me more pious than I am in reality."

"But no one, girl, will ever think you more thoughtless, shortsighted, and careless than you really are. For that reason others will be obliged to think and act for you. I will be the first to show my hand, since I find that your parents permit you your way too much—particularly your father, who would humor you to death. You will allow, I have something to say concerning you in that you are my godchild and because, as I have told you before, you are mentioned in my Will. This coming winter I want you to accompany me into society; the wife of the new City Councilor is an intimate friend of mine—"

The maiden listened with impatience to her aunt's opinions so contrary to her resolutions and inclinations. Before she had time to reply, her mother, Mrs. Riede, the wife of the town Apothecary, came into the parlor with a letter in her hand.

"Clara, papa has written and it concerns you."

The daughter looked at her mother expectantly.

"He is improving at The Springs, the baths are benefitting him. The days, however, are very monotonous. Therefore he wishes you to come

and keep him company, especially on the long walks which the doctor has prescribed."

"I, mama? Is it true?" the girl exulted. "Oh, that is delightful! When will I start, to-morrow, mama?"

"But, Clara," the aunt interrupted, before the mother could answer, "you're talking and acting again like a child! A Watering Place or public Sanatorium is visited by people from all the world; you cannot go to such a resort without suitable clothes; to provide these will take time."

"You are right, Mina," the Apothecary's wife said to her sister; but since her father has asked for her it is better that she go at once. If she starts to-morrow after the early Mass she will be in Baden before night. I will foreward what is lacking to her wardrobe. It would not be right to keep Clement waiting for Clara even a single hour beyond the time absolutely necessary for her to get there." The last remark was intended for Mina.

The aunt yielded to her sister's reasoning and before leaving for her own home a quarter of an hour later, was in full accord with her plan. "Clara is a beautiful, prepossessing girl," Mina observed to herself; "a new dress or two will set her off to advantage. Who knows but she will make a more brilliant match at The Springs than would be possible in this provincial town?"

Clara was doubly, triply glad of the trip: she would be of some service to her dear father, she could satisfy her pardonable curiosity to see what

the resort was like and last but not least, she would thereby for some weeks escape the annoying importunity of her aunt.

* * *

Excerpts from Clara's Diary

December 4th, 189—

Papa, thank God, is now more or less used to Baden. It would be more attractive here if it were summer; on the other hand, the place at this time has the advantage of not being overcrowded with visitors. It is quieter than when the season is in full swing and therefore more to papa's taste. Concerning myself I will say nothing excepting that I am happy and contented. It was by a wise, merciful dispensation of God that I was removed in a way as simple as it was unexpected, from the influence—I was just about to write Cl....of Aunt Mina whose one object in life it seems, is to find me a "suitable partner." I thank her!

Dear God, to whom my heart belongs, Thou knowest how averse I am to her plans! Thou knowest what I have been ardently aspiring to the last two years! And mama knows it and has consented with the one condition that I be patient for a while longer. My dear papa—ah, I know that it is to help on my vocation, God has arranged that I spend some weeks with him alone. It will give me opportunity to tell him all and to unburden my heart. We will meet more closely and can speak more confidentially than were otherwise possible.

December 6th.

To-day is St. Nicholas. By exception papa took his stroll after the bath very early ; he wished to attend Mass on this feast-day. A Capuchin who is here for his health, says it daily in the chapel on the grounds. Only about a dozen people were present but for that very reason the little sanctuary seemed more friendly and devotional. The distance to the chapel is scarcely a hundred steps ; to the parish church, however, quite a half-hour's walk. Papa finds it hard to walk this mile and a half, altho his strength has greatly increased during his sojourn here to date. Oh, how dear to me is the little chapel ! Papa permits me to visit it every afternoon for a quarter of an hour. I am alone then before the Tabernacle. How the heart expands at such a time. "Speak, Lord, Thy servant hears!"

December 7th.

To-day at dinner, thank God, there was a change in the places at table. The person opposite me was moved up three seats to the chair of one of a family who had just left the resort. I am glad we are rid of him ! Neither papa nor I liked him, he seemed so strange. In spite of the hints we gave him that his conversation was annoying, he kept on talking all the same. What did I care about his fine business, his travels and adventures ! The worst about him was his uncanny look and his cynical sneer ! How

glad I am he is gone! My lady neighbor to the left who is never without a supply of gossip, told me I might consider it a compliment to have attracted the notice of the stranger, because altho forty, he was still single and a man immensely wealthy who could well afford to gratify every wish of her he would choose for wife. Be it so! I know of One who is incomparably richer and at the same time infinitely beautiful and exalted.

“I'll my Savior serve and praise
If laughing or in tears;
Exchange with Him my fleeting days
For His eternal years.”

Second Sunday in Advent.

Accompanied papa to early Mass. The young Capuchin said it; his thin pale face showed he was in poor health; he spoke also for a few minutes, so simply, so artlessly, so cordially, that every word touched my heart. “Our age need not wait the coming of the kingdom of God,” he said. “It is in our midst for eighteen hundred years already. He who knows this kingdom, will find in it the truth, the peace, the happiness, for which mankind has sighed and striven from the very beginning. The Son of God was the founder of it; it is His Church. Holy Church will lead us to His kingdom in eternity, heaven. But on our part we must try as members of the Church to deserve heaven. It will not come to us unsought; it re-

quires serious effort. Only the violent will bear it away, said Our Lord." O my God, strengthen me to do Thy will! Let me overcome all opposition which would prevent me from obeying Thee! —To-day there were about two dozen persons present at the Mass. Most of the Catholic visitors at The Springs went to the parish church. My next neighbor at the table is a Catholic also.

There was another change at table. A young lady was placed close to us, she is wonderfully beautiful and refined. Seldom lifting her eyes and extremely reserved, she spoke to none but an old invalid gentleman, the pensioned Ex-Councilor of Bregenz. She had been but recently widowed and is therefore in mourning. Quite a number of callers come here on a Sunday to see their friends. For example, there is a young girl of my age here to see her mother who is taking the waters. Every eye was turned on her as she entered the dining-hall and took a seat at the upper end of the table. She seemed to be a sweet, lovable creature, more so than the young widow. It is a daily entertainment to watch the people in the Sanatorium at dinner. "It is like staging a new play each day from real life," papa said and added: "How fascinating it would be if we could read the interior of every person!" Then I thought, yes! I wish it were so, and beginning with me, that papa could look into and read my heart. Oh, how sluggishly the time passes! When, when, O Lord, will the hour come!"

December 9th.

This afternoon is cheerful, sunny and calm. Papa and I took a walk along the Limmat which laves the base of the "Golden Wall," till we came to Rieden and Nussbaumen. We proceeded leisurely. The Rev. Father Fidelis, that is the name of the young ailing priest, fell in with us; he was alone. Papa after greeting him and thanking him for the privilege of daily Mass at the chapel, asked if he cared to join us. To my great delight he did so and proved most interesting company for papa. Oh, that the two would meet often! He can entertain papa in a way so much better than I. We learnt from him that he had overexerted himself as assistant on the missions, in consequence of which he contracted a severe sickness; his Superiors sent him to the Sanitorium to recuperate. Now that we were close to him we could see how pale and emaciated he was. Papa asked him if he had on hand any good special wine for convalescents;—I think he intends to send the priest a couple bottles of Malaga from his drugstore. One thing about the good priest struck me, namely, that he tipped his hat and greeted every one who passed us on the road, regardless whether the casual pedestrian saluted first or not at all. It happened two or three times that gentlemen crossing our path, at first eyed the Rev. Capuchin darkly and with a sneer on their lips, but being greeted so kindly by him, returned the act of civility. You could notice how surprised they were. In Rieden,

the children dismissed from school, ran up to the Rev. Father and clasped his hand affectionately. Papa was astonished at this and I was delighted. "It is in their very blood," Father Fidelis explained. "They will never forget the Religious. They had had them for many, many years, till finally they were taken from them."

This led the priest to tell papa the story about Augustine Keller, at one time an aspirant for the Priesthood, who becoming an apostate and a mason, contrived in the year forty-one, to have a law passed in the Canton Aargau for the suppression of the eight convents in the Province, and the sequestration by the State of their houses, lands and goods. The Catholics of the Canton and even the Holy See could do nothing to prevent this spoliation and robbery. The wretched apostate had the Government and the Protestant people under his thumb. All convent property was sold and the Religious were expelled. They were treated as criminals and at the time of the outburst of fury on the part of the rabble, it would have been unsafe for any of the exiles to return. The houses of those Catholics are still pointed out, where Religious lay hidden at the risk of their lives. The Catholics are in the minority in Aargau, so what could they do to stop the plundering of churches and abbeys? But few as they are, they are as staunch to-day as they were in the past. Augustine Keller lived to eighty years of age; he died insane, unreconciled to the Church. The people

looked upon his awful death as a punishment from God. Altho the ancient hateful feeling against Religious has somewhat subsided, there is no convent in the Aargau to this very day. The Reverend Fidelis told papa that one of the most renowned of these secularized houses was the abbey at Wettingen. He added, that as the distance was short, if papa wanted to see it, he would act as guide. To my joy, papa accepted. Oh, that was a sweetly melancholy visit! At supper the lady next to me said she saw us in company with the priest; also this, that he is lodged and cared for free of charge at the hotel; that he is not the first priest whom the landlord had received for the love of God, nor would he be the last. Is not that beautiful! May God reward the good proprietor!

December 12th.

Last evening I attended a concert with papa. The great hall of The Springs' Hotel was illuminated to grand effect. The ladies were powdered and gorgeously attired, the French women especially were dressed to perfection. But the pair that outdid them all in the display of silks and satins, diamonds and pearls, was a Russian noblewoman and her daughter. Nevertheless, all this splendor made little impression on me. I would feel ashamed to death to be dressed and decked out merely for the inspection of others. Papa laughed at me for saying this. He remarked that if I had the finery and the

jewels it would not take me long to get used to wearing them. Then with a mischievous look at me he added: "Clara, who knows but that if you had given some encouragement to the advances of our erstwhile neighbor, the rich merchant who sat opposite us at table, you might also in time as his wife have pearls and diamonds to wear!"

But I was quick to answer: "And if he had promised to cover me with diamonds from head to foot, I would have told him to his face: "Sir, keep them, I prefer to remain free." My God, Thou who canst read my heart, knowest why I wish to remain untrammelled by earthly ties. In this case, the gentleman in question has found an "object" to interest him. In the middle of the program during the long intermission a door leading into a large room on the right, was thrown open. Thereby a number of gambling tables in full operation were exposed to view. Many of the people in the hall left their seats, among them papa and myself, to watch the famous game of roulette. We pressed close to a table covered with green baize and observed the lines and counters dotted with little piles of gold and silver; we noticed that as soon as the little ball had stopped rolling, the croupier raked over the money to the winner. Fortunately it was a law of this house that the stakes hazarded must be low. How strange I felt in this place! Papa of course did not play; he looked on merely from curiosity. As we were about to leave I

saw the gentleman of whom I have spoken above, in company with that dear, sweet, beautiful maiden, who had come Sunday on a visit to Baden, to see her mother. Evidently he had just placed a bet upon the table for the guileless girl and was explaining to her the intricacies of the play. The maiden was completely carried away with the novelty of it and was overjoyed whenever she won, and her foolish mother who was with her—I cannot designate her otherwise—proved by her demeanor that she thought it a rare fortune for her daughter to be courted by so rich a man. It is not for me to judge any one; in the present case, however, I cannot help but fear the worst. May God protect you, sweet simple child and may the blush of innocence never fade from your cheek!

December 13th.

We sat together at table after dinner till the last guest had gone. The lady at my left also remained; she told me about last night. The young widow in black, the companion of the old man who faces us at table had likewise been at the concert. A total stranger to the visitors at The Springs, she had no one to escort her to the hall; therefore she begged the old gentleman to serve her in that capacity. He was only too glad to be so distinguished but his joy proved short-lived. Hardly had he led the young woman into the hall and to her seat—it was during the first recess—when two young men introduced them-

selves to her and he was discarded. "I am anxious to see how it will turn out," my neighbor remarked, "or how long it will take till one of the two will be found superfluous."

December 14th.

This afternoon Father Fidelis begged to accompany us, should we choose to go, to the Abbey of Wettingen. The weather was fine and rather warm. Papa consented at once. We followed the Limmat a distance and then crossed the stream on a bridge which spans a deep precipitous ravine thru which it flows. How beautiful this cañon and the hills that face and back it, must look in Springtime! The bleak winter, however, agrees best with the disposition of him who visits the deserted abbey. We entered the large gate which leads to the guest-house and to the other buildings surrounding the abbey proper. "The walls seem to look at us sadly," Father Fidelis remarked, "as if they meant to complain of the many strangers who, with feelings quite different from the white-habited Religious who once dwelt there, intrude on the sacred precincts." We looked at the big ancient church. The portal, which time out of mind the faithful had crossed day by day, was shut. Above it in a recess the stone figures in heroic size of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Bernard and St. Robert, stood and looked down as they had done for centuries. The holy place, which from times immemorial was thronged on Sundays

and holydays by the country people from miles around, is now forgotten and desolate. The church has been turned into a Normal College. We had therefore to ask for the principal of the school to show us around. In the arcade of The Crucifixion we saw the artistic rose-windows so much admired by connoisseurs. From here we passed thru a transept and entered the choir where our guide left us. "The Pater knows the place as well as I," he said. There is an air of desolation reigning everywhere. The walls are dilapidated, the windows dust-begrimed and many of them broken, the tiled floor covered with débris. The side-chapels are still more neglected and look rather like lumber-rooms than a part of a church.

Walking thru the nave, the first object that struck us was the pulpit, a masterpiece of the sculptor's art. On the massive pillars might still be seen wonderful oil-paintings in large baroque frames, and along the main walls priceless statues of the saints. The whole front of the sanctuary is taken up by a wide high altar, the grandeur of which it is impossible to describe. The main aisle leads from it directly to the choir. On the right and on the left of the altar are two smaller ones, the one of the Blessed Virgin, the other of the Crucifixion. Many painted and sculptured pictures are hung around and above the latter. Looking back and upward to the choir just over the little organ, a huge cross reaching to the very ceiling, surrounded by angels, is seen, with Christ

nailed upon it, looking down into the nave of the church. I readily believe that nowhere else can anything be found grander or more impressive. There is a chapel in each of the two transepts whose respective altars are unrivaled in riches and richness.

How often has Holy Mass been said on them and now they are deserted! One of them, however, is used on Sundays and holydays when a priest from the neighborhood comes over in behalf of the Catholic students of the college. At last we came to inspect the sanctuary. How roomy and ornate! To the left of the Main Altar a Baldachin of gold and silk stuffs, faded and fretted, stands over the abbatial chair. The throne and canopy frame are in Rococo style and very imposing. For fifty years the chair has been without an incumbent; no abbot has sat in it for all that time. The walls of the sanctuary are literally covered with the most exquisite works of Christian art. The choir stalls are to the left; the back of each is set off with a pair of pillars in baroque supporting the image of a saint in relief. The side guards or projections of the stalls differ in chiseling one from the other, and are crowned in every conceivable way with scrolls and shells in the Rococo manner.

It is impossible for me to do justice to the holy place so rich in treasures and yet so sad withal! For half a century the white-habited monks have ceased to chant Matins within its walls; the Hours of devotion have lapsed, the stalls are un-

tenanted. The Religious have left the House of God to find a home in other lands. The idle, the curious, the irreverent intruders have changed the haunt of prayer to a place of gossip, jeers and laughter; God's House is made a museum. Did I not control myself, I would blot these pages with tears!

Father Fidelis said: "The words might be applied to this place: 'How doth the city sit solitary as a widow; there is none to comfort her—oh, all ye that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!'"

Upon which papa remarked: "The longer I stay here the more does sympathy for the despoiled abbey grow within me like the pity I feel for a person who has met with a terrible misfortune. The question continually comes up: What can I do to help and comfort the widowed abbey, ravished and deserted?"

"Well," said Father Fidelis, "after all, I do not think that this sanctuary is entirely forsaken; perhaps the Holy Angels have taken up and continue the Office of the Choir which the Cistercians have been forced to relinquish."

"O dear, beautiful, holy site," said I to myself, "would that it were in my power in some practical way to show my love for you!" The thought suggested to me another, which however, I refrain from putting down.

The latest morsel of gossip handed me at table by my kind purveyor to the left is this, that the young lady who had come for a three days' visit

to her mother, will remain indefinitely. Her mother said she could not do without her company. The people say the daughter is prolonging her stay not on account of the mother but for the sake of the merchant who has dazzled and entrapped both parent and child. "It will make a sorry match," my neighbor remarked. "The man is twice as old as the maiden and is reputed to be a fast liver; she is as yet an unsullied child who knows nothing of life; moreover, there is the difference of Religion." I asked my informant if she was sure of her grounds. She replied: "The mother assured me that she and her daughter were thorough Catholics. No one has told me, but it is plain that the merchant believes nothing; it is rumored also that he is a mason; this is probably true and might be expected." "I am glad," said I, "that the case is so clear; it is then impossible for him to succeed in capturing the girl; a very abyss lies between them." My neighbor smiled at me significantly: "Miss Clara, is that all you know of the world?"

Papa added addressing me: "You know nothing of the world and still less of the tryanny of vanity and selfishness. How many a mother idolizes her child, cloys it with delicacies, humors it night and day, overlooks its impertinences, laughs at its vanities and indulges them, and thus systematically ruins it; yet all the while she thinks herself a most excellent mother. Just so, how many a mother has forced upon her daughter a worthless man without a conscience, simply be-

cause he had a brilliant position; priding herself in the meantime for the excellent provision she has made for her who perhaps has sacrificed her happiness and faith in accepting the offer. Does such a wretched mother ever think that thru her machinations her child has been ruined for time and eternity? A title, a position, riches, a comfortable life, are inducements which readily warp the judgment of a parent so that to procure them for her offspring, she will completely disregard the commandments of God and of His Church. This is a purely natural, animal love." I was surprised to hear papa speak in this way; he is generally lenient in his views. However, I agree with him and the more I see of papa, the more am I convinced that his Religion is thorough and deep. My confidence in him is growing from day to day. O my God, let me know the moment most opportune to broach to him what has been uppermost in my mind these many months and years! How the hours drag along! When, O Lord, will the day arrive?

December 17th.

To-day at table, we were moved up some seats on our side. The interesting widow in black does not face us any more. I have remarked that the old man attending her has grown more reticent than ever. The two young gentlemen whom she met at the concert, have been with her once or twice at breakfast. The men have been friends from youth and are inseparable; in her company

they are quite gay and talkative. They have arranged to attend the theatre to-night; the widow of course, will also be there. The "Beggar Student" is on the board. Papa asked me if I had any desire to see the play. No. Thou, O my God, the Bridegroom of my soul, knowest why! Blessed Sanctuary of Wettingen, things beautiful and sacred hast thou spoken to my soul!

December 18th.

Wettingen Abbey has been engraven upon my soul. My visit to the sacred place has left in me a yearning nothing can still. I must speak to papa and open to him my heart. Light and conviction as to my vocation have come to me such as I never had before. It must be the Guardian Angel of the abbey or the prayer of the deceased monks that is enlightening and guiding me. I hear voices within me say: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and only the violent will bear it away." Ye holy monks and nuns, especially ye holy Cistercians of Wettingen, intercede for me! My heart was burning with an inward fire when I visited the holy site of your labors and prayers, and were it within my power I would daily pilgrimage thither.

December 19th.

Ember day. I received Holy Communion to-day, in order to receive the light and courage necessary to broach the question of my vocation to my papa to-morrow. O my good God, O sweet Mother Mary, suggest to my mind and place upon my

tongue words that will be persuasive! My neighbor at table found me less attentive than usual to her budget of news. Yesterday afternoon the merchant took the beautiful maiden and her mother upon an excursion to Brugg and to the ancient cloister at Königsfeld. The finest equipage in Baden was engaged for the purpose with a dashing span of horses. It is now commonly rumored at The Springs that the engagement is set for Christmas Eve. May God prevent it! I have my own affair, however, to look after for the present. To-morrow—to-morrow! Thou, my God, who canst guide the heart of man as Thou dost direct the limpid stream: move papa so that he will readily comply with Thy holy will!

December 20th.

What joy, what happiness, what rapturous bliss! How good art Thou, O my God! Without a struggle papa capitulated. It was on our afternoon walk. At first I felt quite nervous but upon papa's reassuring me in the gentlest way, I finished unburdening my soul, the gist of which was that I wished to become a nun, a bride of Christ Crucified. I told him that that had been my aspiration for years, that therefore I am urged to believe it is the vocation to which God calls me, and that only by complying with it would I find peace and happiness. That my Confessor and mama for a long time have known of this conviction so deeply written in my heart. I have always considered papa a truly religious man and

I was not mistaken. How kindly he spoke to me, how concerned he showed himself in my welfare, how well he knew me! He had suspected my intention and was therefore not surprised. Then too, no doubt, my Guardian Angel and St. Clara came to my assistance.

After talking over the matter thoroughly for two hours, he finally said: "Yes, you may enter the convent!" May the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Blessed Mother be thanked a thousand times. I now belong to my Savior and no power on earth shall prevail in separating me from Him!

The whole afternoon and evening my heart was full to bursting with happiness so that I felt continually like singing out aloud Magnificat! After so long an Advent my Christmas day has come! Immediately after having given his consent, papa and I paid a visit to the chapel. No one was present. We knelt down and prayed. When we left snow was beginning to fall. With the coming snow, winter is at hand, and Christmas day, as is proper, will come in white.

December 21st.

It is still snowing and the flakes are dry and crisp, for the weather is very cold. The waters of the Limmat look black and forbidding as onward they rush between the white banks and past the snow-covered houses of Ennetbaden. All the hilltops around are capped with snow. How quiet and solemn nature has grown! The guests at The Springs are thinning out; there are fewer

at the table than ever. Many have gone, among them the widow in black. She departed early one day without bidding good-by to anyone. Her two cavaliers left also, but not together; the one went in the morning the other at noon. "This is significant," my neighbor observed; "I'll find out what it means."

It does not interest me at all; I only hope they will have a happy Christmas. But a Christmas as blessed as mine none will be likely to have in spite of the fact that it will be the first time in my life I will spend the day away from home. But, then, papa will be with me. Everyday we are talking about what they are doing at home and about the Christmas Tree and the little crib they are getting ready. Papa has bought presents for mama and the children. And, by the way, I am surprised that the Swiss postage-rates are so high!

My neighbor at table had quite a romantic tale in store for me, the principal characters of which were the young widow and her two cavaliers. It would be terrible if it were true. She assured me that her story was well founded. The night before their sudden departure, the widow and the two gentlemen in question had been at the theatre. After accompanying the lady back to her hotel they visited a wine room. Before long a quarrel started between the men who had become enemies on account of the woman. They struck each other in the face and followel this up with a fierce set-to, and finally agreed to seek full satisfaction in a

duel. The lady apprised of the scandalous story the first thing in the morning, was indignant at the disgrace brought upon her and refused to remain a single hour longer at the hotel. Neither the two men got to see her before her departure. Indeed neither wished to see her until the duel had been fought. What an Advent and Christmas celebration!

December 23d.

Father Fidelis bid us good-by to-day. He was really a friend to us altho he visited us but seldom. Papa will miss him sorely. He is better and by Christmas is expected back again in his monastery; on his way to his abbey he is permitted to see his good old mother. "This visit," he said, "and that I am restored to health, is my Christmas gift; it was more than I looked for. He asked me what I expected for Christmas. Blushing I answered: "In truth I have already received my gift. the best and richest possible." That is all I said nor did he question me further. But papa added gravely: "As far as my permission will allow, Clara for Christmas will receive the veil." Thereupon the Rev. Father uncovering his head said solemnly: "May the Child Jesus bless His bride most abundantly!" "Do you, Rev. Father, in His name bless her and me," papa begged. Accordingly we knelt down and Father Fidelis blessed us. "If not again in this world, then may we meet in heaven," he added. Papa and I bid him farewell with tears in our eyes.

Christmas Eve

After supper all the guests at the Sanatorium gathered in the ballroom around a huge Christmas Tree which had been set up there, and amused themselves with singing and music as one large family. Papa did not enjoy the entertainment overmuch, especially when in addition to the music dancing was suggested. Just as we were about to leave the hall, that rich merchant whom I so much distrusted, stepped in and spoilt the whole evening for me. To the assembled guests he announced his engagement to that sweet, guileless child, who had come to The Springs scarcely a fortnight ago to visit her mother. The girl was radiant with beauty, the mother apparently supremely happy. Naturally we all congratulated mother and daughter. "Now she is sold for better, for worse," papa remarked all put out, as we left the room; "the gold of the millionaire was the price paid. How could her mother have consented! And yet, the maiden is by no means wholly blameless. She is old enough to know her duty to God and His Church. Had she refused her consent the first act of what will probably be a tragedy, would not have been staged.

For many an hour more the music from the hall came up to my room, and all the while I could not help thinking of the newly-engaged. Not for all the world would I change with you, poor child, altho every wish of yours for a time will be fulfilled in the worldly sphere into which you have been introduced. So God makes me worthy of the

Religious Habit to which I aspire I will be happier than you even here below.

Welcome, dearest Jesus, a thousand times, upon Thy advent among us to-night. Blessed be Thou for having become man for our sakes! I have chosen Thee for my own, Thine I wish to remain forever. Let me hide myself in Thy heart, myself and all, all, all, that I am and have!"

* * *

The orchestrated High-Mass in the parochial church was over. The outstreaming people dispersed to their homes.

Clara and her papa remained a while longer so as not to be caught in the crush at the door. As father and daughter were slowly wending their way homeward along the high banks of the Limmat, he said: "Clara, you have not as yet told me what you wanted for Christmas." "If you wish me to express my desire, I will do so," she replied with a blush on her lovely face. "If possible I would like to pay another visit to Wettingen Abbey. You cannot conceive, papa, what joy it would give me. I do not wish, however, that you overexert yourself; if the way is too tiresome for you I think that my neighbor at table would accompany me. Moreover, to be explicit, I would prefer to make the trip this afternoon. The day is wonderfully fine, the snow is packed and the road is good."

"It would be still better," Mr. Riede suggested with a smile, "to hire a sleigh and ride. Don't

you think so? If you have any reason to agree with me it shall be done."

"Well then, papa, let us journey over by sleigh. You can recall the remark you made," Clara continued, "upon our first visit to Wettingen in company with Father Fidelis? You said that you looked upon the ruins of the abbey with pity and felt like doing something to console the widowed house of God. I think it a fulfilment of your wish if we pay the Cistercian sanctuary a visit on Christmas day. Of all the days in the year this will be one without doubt when not a person will think of going to the abbey. How different to-day from former years is Christmas kept at Wettingen!"

"Clara, your reason is good. This afternoon, then, we will take a ride to the monastery; and in order to have the benefit of the sleigh-excursion we will approach the place by generous detours."

It was sunny and dazzling, hill and valley scintillated with light and the air was fresh and bracing, on the afternoon the Apothecary and his daughter left The Springs for Wettingen by sleigh. In a short time they reached the hallowed site and having put up at the inn at the portal, they entered the church. The porter did not accompany them, he preferred to remain in his warm little lodge. Nave and sanctuary were silent as death. The sculptured stalls of the fathers and brothers seemed to say: "Why are we unoccupied? When will our tenants return? How long will it be till we hear once more: Deus, in

adjutorium meum intende? When will the holy Choir-song be resumed?" For fifty years an air of unspeakable desolation has weighed upon the place and held the casual visitor in thrall.

The lips of the heavenly bride, the Church of God, who prayed and chanted within these walls with the tongues of the white-habited Religious, are sealed; silence, sadness and gloom are perched upon every finial of altar and choir-stall. The curtains of the abbatial throne are faded and rent. Desolation reigns supreme.

At last Clara whispered: "Papa, at the time when you said, 'O that something could be done to lift the sadness from this holy place!' I determined that once I had your permission to enter the convent I would choose this very place to offer myself as bride to my dear Savior. This, then, will be our Christmas gift to the deserted abbey."

With moist eyes the father saw his child approach the Main Altar and kneel down. Folding her hands and raising her eyes to the Crucifix she silently offered herself to God for time and eternity. Not a word was spoken aloud. The heavenly Bridegroom, however, heard and received her gift. The souls of the deceased Cistercians and the Holy Angels were present no doubt, to witness Clara's touching oblation of herself to God in the Religious State. The father in the rear, was also on his knees and renewed his consent to the sacrifice of what was dearest to him in life.

Such was the gift which on this Christmas day was presented to the widowed Abbey of Wettingen.

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